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BETWEEN THE ACTS

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BETWEEN THE ACTS

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

NEIGHBOURS OF OURS

IN THE VALLEY OF TOPHET

THE THIRTY DAYS' WAR BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY

LADYSMITH: THE DIARY OF A SIEGE

THE PLEA OF PAN

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BETWEEN THE ACTS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

BY

HENRY W. NEVINSON

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1904

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PREFACE

THE pleasantest times in a drama are generally the intervals between the acts. The tension, if there has been any tension, is loosened; if there has been laughter, it has left a cheery mood; and, at the worst, the boredom is over. We turn to converse with fellow-men, to praise, to criticise, and to suggest the improvements that the author might so easily have made. Or we may brood over the past act in silence till we see it concentrated into a single dramatic moment, perhaps into a single sentence. Or some apparently insignificant episode may dwell in the mind, and from that starting-point we may advance to all manner of strange situations in a world that is rightly called our own, till at last we lose sight of the original play and even of the track that led us from it.

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In most cases the drama of life is also divided into acts, and only when the drop-scene has fallen are we conscious of the strangeness and significance of each division. Then we can turn round and applaud or criticise or suggest the considerable improvements that now seem obvious. By memory and imagination we can gather up the impression and purport of it all into one scene or a single word. Or perhaps some episode of apparent unimportance becomes suffused with a strange light and touched by a romance of happiness or sorrow unobserved while the parts were being played. And so we dream over it till it grows into other shapes and begins to take on itself a greater truth than reality, until in the midst of our visions a little bell rings, the footlights are turned up, the curtain rises, and we are hurried into a new act unsanctified by time, or perhaps into the act of death. For the "waits" are short.

So that autobiography is necessarily a matter of intervals, and I think the great writers of it are often at their best when they forget for a moment the leading part they themselves have

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played in their own history, and tell us of other characters which have moved upon the distant stage and, but for them, would have been forgotten for ever. One would give, for instance, a volume or two of introspection and self-analysis for the glimpse that Goethe shows us of a stuffy, snuffy old gentleman who, seated in a smoky garret high among the roofs of an ancient German town, suddenly at the end of a long and damaging criticism of terrestrial things exclaimed, "I detect errors in God as well!" In the following scenes, then, I have tried to represent only certain casual episodes and situations which I have observed or imagined in the successive acts of a life to which fortune has granted a share of variety. The first two chapters, it is true, are to some extent personal and even historic, but they deal with things so remote as to have gathered round them something of the unreality and holiness of the Middle Ages, and I have given them the essay form partly in the hope of avoiding the types of children and schoolboys which sometimes plague us in fiction and on the stage.

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The pieces of verse that follow the scenes serve in some cases to prolong the mood, but the connection is never more than a similarity of mood, and sometimes not even that.

H. W. N.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
A London Merchant	1
Sabrina Fair	17
A Don's Day	35
Sic Vos non Vobis	73
Gaudeamus Igitur	107
In Twenty-four Hours	147
Corpus Christi	181
The Relief of Eden	193
Væ Victis	233
Of Your Charity	243
Izwa!	265
A Little Honey	285
The Last Rag	325
The Pinnacle of Fame	345

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BETWEEN THE ACTS

I

A LONDON MERCHANT

TO me, looking back on the times when I used to come up from the country as a child to my grandfather's house near London, one event in the day's routine always seems specially distinctive. It was as essential as the peculiar smell of the old house itself—that fragrant mixture of flowers, spices, resin, and I don't know what besides. I mean the event of family prayers, so different from our rites at home, and so much more alarming. For with us the head of the family performed the worship throughout, but at my grandfather's they "read round," so that even the youngest and feeblest was compelled to take a terrifying share. At half-past eight the

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butler clanged a great brass bell where it might be heard through bedrooms, gardens, and fields, and I have known feminine "grown-ups" shed real tears when they were late for that bell's warning. Into the long dining-room the sons and daughters of the house entered by one door, and when they were ranged on chairs around the breakfast china, the lower door opened, admitting the retainers in file according to rank, except that the housekeeper came first and the butler last, like the non-commissioned officers acting as guides to a company on parade. All took their seats, the women on chairs, the men on a bench covered with green baize, and the ceremony began.

Let us imagine it a morning in the middle sixties. For though my grandfather lived to a good age, perhaps he was never quite at his best after eighty-five. In appearance he had a notable look of Scott, though his only connection with literature was a large sum he had once paid a publisher for bringing out a posthumous work by some Evangelical relation. The work ran to several volumes, I think twelve, and was called *Lives of Eminent Christians.* The tie of blood compelled all the family to read it, but to us it

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was even more dreary than *The Family Sepulchre,* a series of death-bed scenes, which was one of the few "Sunday books" we were allowed to open on the Lord's Day. In all literature our family standard would now be thought rather rigid. It is true I once heard my grandfather recite the "Meeting of the Waters," after the two o'clock dinner, with great pleasure and tenderness, but everyone looked at the dessert plates as though wondering what was coming next. No poem of Byron's was allowed in the house, and towards the poet himself he felt a regretful detestation, as towards a lost soul from Britain's aristocracy. I have been told of an even sterner and more practical criticism still. Once when my aunts were young (incredible time!) he conducted them all—I suppose to the old Pump Room, or to the Holly Bush Assembly Hall at Hampstead, where "Conversaziones" were held —to hear Joanna Baillie recite one of her "Plays of the Passions." I do not know which passion was the drama's theme, but the very title ought to have been warning enough. In the midst of the recitation he rose, and to the word of command, "My dears, this is no fit place for you!" he led his four daughters out in file from the dubious

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haunt of culture back to their home's security, leaving the astonished poetess to express what passions she pleased. It is not for any dangerously passionate tendencies that people refrain from reading Joanna Baillie now.

A violent Evangelical by conviction, he nevertheless remained an unflinching Tory owing to some ancestor's reputed service to King Charles. Next to the Pope of Rome, he probably hated Gladstone most of human things, and I well remember once after prayers how, springing up from his knees and holding the *Times* instead of the Bible in his hand, he exclaimed to the assembled household, "The Lords have saved England again! The Lords have saved England again! I always knew they would." Whereat everyone was much gratified, and in the kitchen the servants all said with pride that master had been right as usual. As an emblem of his politics and position, he always wore a tall hat even in the garden, and he went shooting in it upon the moors of his native Yorkshire. For he was a great sportsman, and travelled north every August with his setters and pointers, well content if he could bag a few brace after each long day's toiling behind the dogs. On the walls of the dining-

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room hung pictures of one or two favourite horses, still kept in service, though long past their work. And side by side with the horses were comfortable portraits of himself and my grandmother in middle-aged prosperity. In other rooms were crayon drawings of my aunts, with long white necks like gentle swans, and wavy "ringlets" surrounding the innocently smiling heads. It never even occurred to me that my aunts once really looked like that. To me they were but relics of the dark abysmal ages before I was born—beings whose natural destiny it was to discuss the various ailments of myself and my cousins. Yet the portraits were said to be their "very image," and indeed my aunts were younger when I first remember them than I am now. They would still sometimes stand together around the piano, and after a prolonged selection of a keynote, would sing "Phyllis is my only joy," or "Tell me, shepherds, have you seen my Flora pass this way?" One of them could sing both first and second. But then my mother used to tell me that that aunt had always been the clever one.

To return to the scene of worship round the breakfast table. If a clergyman was present, he

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was expected to occupy the green leather arm-chair at the top of the assembly, to read the first verse, and, when the chapter was finished, to supply a moral commentary out of his own head. Or, if the eldest son was staying in the house, he took the place of honour, because he was a Member of Parliament. But he was not bound to give his own commentary, and in the ordinary way my grandfather, being only a layman and a merchant, never trusted himself beyond the printed limits of an eighteenth-century divine, who must have written something commonplace upon every chapter in the Bible. For we read the books straight through, omitting only the genealogies, the Levitical law, the indecent passages, and the Psalms; and that commentary never failed.

When my grandfather had finished his verse, which he read in a deep, full voice, calling to my mind the Day of Judgment, the next senior member of the family took up the tale. With a little calculation I could fix which lines would come to me, and spell them out beforehand. I have no doubt now that others did the same, but at the time I never supposed that anyone else could be so wicked. If the worst came to

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the worst, and I stuck helplessly at a word, my grandfather would suddenly throw in the due correction, making me jump with shame, though the maids used to tell me afterwards I was a very pretty little reader, by which I know now that they meant I had light, wavy hair. My turn safely over, I could settle down to listen to the mistakes of others with the relief of him who has swum to land. As a rule the servants came next below me, the interval between two tall windows naturally separating them from the family. At their head sat the housekeeper—whether maid or widow no one ever asked, but of human things she seemed the most maidenly. She read her verse in a thin and fugitive voice, like the wind among the reeds. A delicate curl just shook at each temple, and on her head fluttered the super-sensual essence of a cap. Her home was the "storeroom," pleasantest room in all the house, for the air was laden with the smell of dried fruits and coffee and nutmegs, and one could climb on the top of the cupboards. There she would read us comfortable tales from the *Sunday at Home*—"The Gospel in Cæsar's Household" was her best—but to herself she always read the Marriage Service.

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Second to her in rank came Jane, the cook, the "gentle giantess" of the estate. She had entered the family as a child, had been taught her letters by the "young ladies," had grown fat on happiness and faithful work through an indefinite age, and only left at last for a misery of marriage. Huge as she was, she could only send the tiniest whisper of a voice across the room, and it was generally during her verse that the critical moment of the ceremony came. For the old coachman, being very deaf at the best, and not hearing a sound of any kind whilst Jane was reading, always thought the time was come for him to begin. So far he had been following the verses with his enormous finger on a principle of averages which never worked out right. But now with a deep, harsh voice, like a raven's croak, he would break in upon the giantess's gasping whisper, and repeat some Biblical truth which we had passed a stage or two before. On one side the scullery-maid would tug his coat-sleeve, on the other the gardener stamped on his toes; but, outside the stable, all the old man's senses lay very deep down and worked but slowly, so that he had generally toiled through two or three lines before he could be brought

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to stand. We all looked a little uneasy, but from first to last I never saw a smile on anyone's face.

The "maids" were naturally a more variable class than the older retainers. As a rule there were perhaps five or six of them, but only one remains distinctly in my mind. For it so happened I was present at two scenes in her career. Soon after she came, my grandfather told her, as a householder should, that he could forgive breakages, if only they were confessed. For a moment she stood hesitating on the edge of the Turkey carpet, and then all in one breath she gave some such list as this: "Please, sir, I've broke two cups and five saucers and a bedroom jug and a wine-bottle and a big pie-dish and a little pie-dish." Then she paused, conscious of rectitude, but with apron half raised in deprecation. When she was gone, my grandfather only said, "That seems to be an honest girl." But in the second scene, her apron covered her face. It was wet in semi-transparent patches, and things were said which I did not understand.

Among the elder male retinue my terror was old Forbes, the gardener, who sat next below the

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deaf coachman. Into this world of misery he had come, and whilst here it was his destiny to make it blossom like the rose. That destiny he fulfilled, but no trace of satisfaction was ever seen upon his brown and crabbed face. On the lawns or in the hothouses he laboured from morn till eve, always with the same rapt look, as one occupied with the burning depths of eternity that lurked below the garden beds. Year after year he wore an old Scotch cap with a check border and no tails. That was his standard, his battle-flag, a quite unnecessary emblem of his superior nationality, marking him out as one of the elect in a heathen land. I am quite sure he would have shed his blood for any of the family with sour but unhesitating self-sacrifice. Otherwise he seemed to despise all men and women about equally, reserving a special detestation for us children. Yet perhaps it was rather with indifference than contempt that he regarded grown mankind, as beings whirling to their own place, and in their brief passage conspiring to spoil his gardens by their carnal appetites. To them at times he may have extended a fellow-mortal's pity. But in children he saw nothing except living examples of original sin. Born in sin and

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children of wrath we undoubtedly were, and our predestination was all on one side. In us he only beheld brands meet for the burning, and even when I was set to help him by weeding a gravel path with a rusty oyster-knife, he neglected that corner of the garden for a week rather than look at me. I never heard him speak to any of the other retainers, and except for his verse in the morning, he spent whole days in absolute silence. Of all his duties the hardest must have been to allot and label the various gooseberry bushes granted every spring to the "maids" for their special delight. A woman in the garden reminded him of the first sin, but from the days of Paradise certainly no better gardener, however much thwarted by women, toiled at the earth under which he was to lie. He read his verse with harsh emphasis, like the grating of unoiled machinery. Every sentence of the Bible was to him a word from the Book of Seven Seals, and he would have converted the Songs of Solomon itself into a condemnation of the material universe.

Next him sat Charlie, the carpenter, who commanded the long woodshed and the glories of the sawpit, in the depths of which it was easy with a

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few rough logs to build old Crusoe's hut, or an Indian wigwam, or such a fort as mutinous sepoys never could have stormed. So Charlie was my friend and hero, till one evil day he found me flat beside the pond, fishing out newts with my boot for net. It was part of his labour to clean the family boots, and I think he never spoke to me again. Long afterwards I dimly remember hearing that he vanished into Canadian forests with his brother Jem—a sterner man, who controlled the cows and other bisons, and drove them up to milk.

Others came—young Sam, the coachman's son, who used to wash the tears off my face with his handkerchief, licking it first, when I cut my finger in weeding—and others again whom I can hardly recall, except in fever.

Last came, and first did go, the model butler, most polite and alert of men, always unruffled, with duty always fulfilled before the mere shadow of command had risen on his master's face. His eye was like a spaniel's, ever on the watch, and for all the world he had a smile and a kindly word. Nurses and housemaids alike adored him, and many a time did they stand calling the higher powers to witness their

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admiration as he tossed me up to the pantry ceiling. I do not forget the feeling of awe, as at the opening of a sudden abyss, when I heard it whispered one morning that he had been found drunk upon his bedroom floor, dressed, and with the lamp still burning. So ruin came, first slowly, then more fast, till one day my mother sorrowfully told us that the best of servants had died in a country ditch.

When the disjointed reading was finished, all books were shut, and the commentary was listened to with minds vacant and at rest. That over, we turned round to kneel, amid a feminine rustle of silk from my aunts and stiff cotton from the maids. With faces pressed to the backs or seats of the chairs, we waited while a long prayer was read. Then all broke into "Our Father" with a mixture of basses and trebles, that I was once well shaken for calling "the general roar." In that repetition the deaf coachman went his own pace, and was generally left finishing "for ever and ever" after the blessing had been given. We rose, and there was a pause while the servants demurely left the room. It was the established custom for one of the elder members then to make a leading remark so as

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to bridge the gulf between the eternities and the breakfast-table. If the Member of Parliament was there, the remark was expected to be political. Otherwise it usually turned on a missionary meeting, the weather, or the abominations of "the Tractarians," who in my mind were intimately connected with the fires of Smithfield as depicted in a terrific *Book of Martyrs*, the only really interesting volume in my grandfather's library.

It is a scene, as I said, from a vanished past. Except a few middle-aged children now scattered far and wide through the world, nearly all who witnessed it have already gone. In a few years the Christian feudalism which gave it character will seem as remote as the Crusades. In a few years no one will remember the look of that furniture or the sweet and separate smell of each room. The house itself is doomed. The prairies, the desert islands, the enchanted caves and forests of its gardens and fields are now to be divided into plots for residential villas and flats, which not even a child's imagination can ever fill with cannibals or fairies of the green. And that is why for a moment I recall it from the abyss of time, whilst our ship, leaving Teneriffe upon the left,

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is plunging ever southward through the hot air towards the line, and before us unknown constellations are rising over Africa; but the Bear has not yet quite vanished in our wake.

ss. "*Scot*," *September*, 1899.

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THE PICTURESQUE

THE Abbey Hall is fair to see,
With lawns the smoothest ever trod,
And many a quaint exotic tree
Encompassing the house of God.

A few old arches, open still
At certain hours throughout the week,
Where antiquaries gaze their fill,
And amorous pairs play hide and seek.

At luncheon in the aisles they sit,
The painter sets his painting-desk;
No place in all the shire so fit
For picnics and the picturesque.

O home of God, of God bereft—
O modern virtue's counterpart—
Sleek ruins of a conscience, left
To grace the pleasaunce of a heart.

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II

SABRINA FAIR

" High the vanes of Shrewsbury gleam,
Islanded in Severn stream;
The bridges from the steepled crest
Cross the water east and west.

" The flag of morn in conqueror's state
Enters at the English gate;
The vanquished eve, as night prevails,
Bleeds upon the road to Wales."

A Shropshire Lad.

IN my old school upon the Severn, I can see now that we were not educated at all; no scientific methods were tried upon us. I doubt if any of the masters had even heard there was such a thing as a science of education. To them education was a natural process which all decent people went through, like washing; and their ideas upon it were as unscientific as was our method of "swilling," when we ran down naked from the bedrooms to sheds in the backyards,

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sluiced cold water over us with zinc basins, and then came dripping back to dry upstairs. And yet I do remember one young mathematician whose form by the end of his hour was always reduced to a flushed and radiant chaos; and when the other masters complained, he replied that this was part of his "system." So I suppose that he at all events was scientific, and had possibly studied Pädagogik in Germany.

The others were content to teach what they had learnt, and in the same manner. Most of them were Shrewsbury boys themselves, and because Greek had been taught there for more than three centuries, they taught Greek. Of course, we had Latin too, and up to the sixth form our time was equally divided between the two languages; but Latin, as being easier and rather more connected with modern life, never ranked so high, and we turned to it with the relief which most men feel when the ladies rise from the dinner-table. Latin prose, it is true, was thought more of than Greek prose, and no doubt there was some instinctive reason why. I suspect that in reality it is the more difficult; for it was the unconscious rule of our ancient tradition, that of two subjects the more difficult was

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the better worth learning, provided always that both were entirely useless.

Of Greek our knowledge was both peculiar and limited. We were allowed no devices to make the language in the least interesting, no designs, or pictures, or explanations. We had no idea what the Greek plays looked like on the stage, or why Demosthenes uttered those long-winded sentences. We knew nothing of the Dantesque pride underlying the tortured prose of Thucydides, and when a sixth-form master told us that the stupendous myth at the end of the *Phædo* appeared to him singularly childish, we took no notice of the remark one way or the other. We only knew the passage was easy, just as Homer was easy, and the choruses hard. The greater part of the school believed that Greek literature was written as a graduated series of problems for Shrewsbury boys to solve, and when a sixth-form boy was asked by a new master whether he did not consider the *Prometheus* a very beautiful play, he replied that he thought it contained too many weak cæsuras.

So there was nothing in the least artistic about our knowledge. No one expected to find either beauty or pleasure in what we read, and we found

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none. Nor were we scientific; we neither knew nor cared how the Greek words arose, or how the aorists grew, and why there were two of them, like Castor and Pollux. After all these things do the Germans seek, but us they never troubled. Our sole duty was to convert, with absolute precision, so much Greek into so much English. No possible shade of meaning or delicate inflection on the page was allowed to slide unnoticed. The phases of every mood with all its accompanying satellites were traced with the exactitude of astronomy. No one cared much about beauty of language provided the definite meaning was secure. Yet beauty sometimes came by accident, just as happiness comes, and I first learnt what style is from the renderings of the head-boy when he mounted the "rostrum." He was himself an antique Roman; his eagle nose, wide mouth, and massive chin, the low, broad brow, with black curls growing close to the square-backed head, were made to rule nations. But not long since he died in the serviceable obscurity of a mastership, for which his knowledge of Greek was his only qualification. It is true he was our captain of football, but he owed that position to his Greek rather than his play.

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When as a new boy I was first taken for a walk out of bounds on a Sunday afternoon by one of the upper sixth, who is now an earthly saint, we went to a hillside with a long blue vision of western mountains, and while I had no thought or eyes for anything but them, he continued to talk quietly of Greek—the significance of various forms, the most telling way of turning this meaning or that, especially, I remember, the cunning idioms by which the idea of "self" might be rendered in verse, either with emphasis or modesty. So it was. The school breathed Greek, and through its ancient buildings a Greek wind blew. To enter head-room—a dim, panelled chamber which the upper sixth used as a study —was to become a scholar. I doubt if good Greek verse could be written anywhere else. Winged iambics fluttered through the air; they hung like bats along the shelves, and the dust fell in Greek particles. Now the school is moved to the further side of the river, and its grey and storied stone is exchanged for cheerful brick. Our old head-room has become the housekeeper's parlour in some citizen's dwelling, but on the hearthstone at eventide beside her petticoats squats the imperishable Lar, real as a rat though

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not so formidable, and murmurs iambics to himself.

Other subjects besides Greek were taught, but no one ever learnt them. There was French, for instance, taught by an aged Englishman who had outlived three generations of mortal head-masters, and, besides his wig, was supposed gradually to have acquired an artificial body that would last for ever. To us he was important because he registered the punishments, and had the reputation of a very bloodhound for detecting crime. Certainly he was the best comic reader I ever heard, and when he read prayers at night the whole school used to howl like a rising and falling wind, following the cadence of his voice. But nobody learnt French of him. Once, because I had shown him decent politeness, he assigned me a prize. I could honestly say I knew less French than anyone this side the Channel; and yet I should never have outlived a certain stigma attaching to my imaginary knowledge of anything so paltry, if nature had not given me the power of running long distances without fatigue. But, unhappily for me, to prove that power I had to wait from summer till autumn, when the school huntsman led out his pack in white to scour the

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wild country west of the town—a country of yellow woods and deep pools, where water-fowl rose, and of isolated limestone hills, the promise of Wales. Each run followed a course fixed by old tradition. Foxes were seldom sent out, and were never supposed to be caught. We ran for the sake of running, just as we learnt Greek for the sake of learning it.

Mathematics were held in scarcely less contempt than French. We had two wranglers to teach us, but they never taught anyone. Their appearance in form was hailed with indecent joy. As one of the classical masters said, it was like the "Cease fire" on a field-day, and the whole body of boys abandoned themselves at once to relaxation. In the lower forms far-sailing darts were seen floating through the air as at a spiritualist séance; in the upper we discussed the steeplechase or did Greek verses. A boy who really knew any mathematics was regarded by ourselves and the masters as a kind of freak. There was no dealing with him. His mathematical marks got him into forms beyond his real knowledge—his knowledge of Greek. He upset the natural order of things. He was a perpetual Ugly Duckling, that could not emit iambics. So his lot was

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far from enviable, and happily I remember only two such cases.

In the sixth, it was Saturday mornings which were given to this innocent pursuit of mathematics, and to it we owed our happiest hours of peace. To go up School Gardens on a bright summer day, to cross the leisurely street of the beautiful country-town, to buy breakfast (for an ancient tradition kept us strenuously underfed), to devour it slowly and at ease, knowing there was only mathematics before us that morning, to be followed by the long afternoon and Sunday—that was a secure and unequalled joy, and whenever mathematics are mentioned, I still feel a throb of gratitude for those old pleasures. Our one lesson on Sunday was a difficulty to the masters. Of course there was the Greek Testament to fall back upon, but its Greek was so easy and so inferior to ours that it became a positive danger. We were sometimes given a Latin catechism, by some Protestant Father of the sixteenth century, denouncing Transubstantiation, but that also we had to read with caution lest it should influence our Latin prose. Once we waded through Dr. Westcott's *Gospel of the Resurrection,* a supposed concession to those of us who were

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going to Oxford. On Sunday evenings we learnt cantos of the *In Memoriam* by heart, and explained them next morning by suggesting how they might be turned into Greek or Latin lyrics. Then the real labour of life began again with Greek, and so the weeks rolled on without a change. Once, it is true, our greatest master got an afternoon hour for the teaching of wisdom to the sixth, and we really tried to listen, for he stood six foot four and had been captain of football at Oxford. But it was no good. Wisdom was far too easy and unimportant for us, and we let her voice cry in vain. Of such diversions as physical science or mechanics we never even heard, though their absence was perhaps sufficiently compensated for by the system of fagging, under which all the lower forms learnt the arts of lighting fires and plain cooking for the upper sixth. The new boys were also practised in public oratory, having in turn to proclaim the athletic announcements for the day, standing on the breakfast-table. The proclamation began with "O-Yes!" three times repeated, and ended with "God save the Queen, and down with the Radicals!" Anyone was at liberty to throw bread, sugar, or boots at the crier during his

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announcement; and many of my schoolfellows have since displayed extraordinary eloquence on public platforms and in the pulpit.

In politics our instruction was entirely practical. For centuries the school had been divided into bitterly hostile camps—day-boys and boarders—doing the same work, sitting side by side in form, but never speaking to each other, or walking together, or playing the same games. No feud of Whig and Tory, or Boer and Briton, was so implacable as ours. "Skytes" we called them, those hated day-boys, for whom the school was founded—mere Scythians, uncouth and brutish things that sacrificed the flesh of men and drank from a human skull. Out of school hours we did not suffer them within school gates. They were excluded even from the ball-court, except for fights. They were compelled to pay for separate football and cricket fields; and in football they adopted the vulgar rules of Association, while we aristocrats of tradition continued to cherish an almost incomprehensible game, in which, as in a Homeric battle, the leaders did the fighting, while the indistinguishable host trampled to and fro in patient pursuit of a ball which they rarely touched, but sometimes saw. The breach may

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have begun when Elizabeth was Queen, or in the days of Cavaliers and Roundheads, and there is no knowing how long it would have lasted but for the wisdom of that wise master already mentioned. Whilst I was still there, myself a red-hot boarder, he began delicately to reason, amid the choking indignation of both sides, whose rancour increased as reason shook it. No reformer ever set himself to a task so hopeless, and yet it was accomplished. Within a year we were playing football under Association rules together, and before the old school was removed, the wrath of ages was appeased.

For the rest, I cannot say that the ingenuous art of Greek, though we learnt it faithfully, softened our manners much, or forbade us to be savages. One peculiar custom may stand for many as an instance of the primitive barbarity which stamps upon any abnormal member of a herd. Since the last Pancratium was fought at Olympia, no such dire contest has been seen among men as our old steeplechase. Clad in little but gloves—a little which grew less with every hundred yards—the small band of youths tore their way through bare and towering hedges, wallowed through bogs, plunged into streams and ponds,

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racing over a two miles of country that no horse would have looked at. The start was at the Flash side of the Severn, and if I had cleared the first stream and the hedge beyond it with one clean bound, as my young brother did, I would have it engraved on my tombstone: "He jumped the Flash ditch. R.I.P." The winner of the race was, of course, the boy who came in first; but the hero of the school was he from whom the most blood was trickling at the finish, and who showed the bravest gashes on his face as he walked down the choir of St. Mary's at next morning's service. The course for the display of all this heroism was marked by the new-boys, whose places as "sticks" were allotted by the huntsman the day before, the whole school accompanying them, and by immemorial custom the most unpopular new-boy of the year was always set at the last post—a slippery stump of ancient tree projecting in the very midst of a particularly filthy pond. As we drew nearer and nearer the place, all of us advancing at a gentle trot, one could see the poor creature growing more and more certain that he was the boy. We all exchanged smiles, and sometimes his name was called out, for all, except himself, had agreed

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who it would probably be. At last the pond was reached, and we stood round it in a thick and silent circle, awaiting the public execution of a soul. The boy's name was called. He came sullenly forward, and made a wild leap for the stump. Invariably he fell short, or slipped and plunged headlong into the stagnant water, whilst we all yelled with satisfaction. Wallowing through the black slush and duckweed, he clambered on to the tree at last, and stood there in the public gaze, declared the most hateful boy in all the school. Upon himself the ceremony had not always the elevating effect at which, I suppose, we aimed. For I remember one disappointed moralist in the fourth form remarking, "Frog's pond doesn't seem to have done that fellow any good. He wants kicking again."

It is all gone now—Frog's pond, the steeplechase, and the runners. The old school itself has been converted into a museum, and in the long, raftered room where we learnt Greek, a crocodile with gaping jaws, stuffed monkeys, and some bottled snakes teach useful knowledge to all who come. When last I was there, they were teaching a blue-nosed boy to make squeaks on the glass with his wetted finger, and he was

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getting on very well. But from my old seat (under the crocodile) I could see beyond the Berwick woods the wild and tossing hills, already touched with snow, just as when I used to watch the running light upon them, and envy the lives folded in their valleys. Close in front was the bend of the river where Bryan's Ford swings past Blue Rails, just as it ran one night, still longer ago, when Admiral Benbow as a little boy launched his coracle for the sea. In a shining horseshoe the river sweeps round the spires on Shrewsbury Hill. The red castle guards the narrows, and east and west the Welsh and English bridges cross the water. Below the English bridge I never cared to discover what might come, for the river ran down towards the land of dulness, opposite to the course of adventure and the sun. But to follow up the stream, to scrape across her shingly fords, to watch for the polished surface of her shoals, and move silently over the black depths where no line had reached a bottom —let me die, as Wordsworth says, if the very thought of it does not always fill me with joy! Incalculable from hour to hour, the river never loses her charm and variety. In a single night the water will rise twenty feet, and pour foaming

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through the deep channel it has been cutting for so many years. Along its banks of sandstone and loam the dotterels run, and rats and stoats thread the labyrinth of the flood-washed roots. There the bullfinches build, kingfishers dig their "tunnelled house," moorhens set their shallow bowl of reeds, and sometimes a tern flits by like a large white swallow. On tongues of gravel, where the current eddies under the deep opposite bank, red cattle with white faces used to come down in summer and stand far out in the stream, ruminating and flicking their tails, or following us with wondering eyes as we ran naked over the grass and fell splashing into the water. Severn water is full of light and motion. Never stopping to sulk, it has no dead and solid surface, but is alive right through, reflecting the sunshine, green with long ribbons of weed, orange from the pebbly bed, and indigo where the unbreaking crests of its ripples rise. As it passes beneath deep meadows and under the solemn elms, it whispers still of the mountains from which it came. Into the midst of hedgerow villages and ordered fields it brings its laughing savagery, telling of another life than theirs, of rocks and sounding falls and moorland watersheds. Other

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rivers may be called majestic, and we talk of Father Tiber or Father Thames, but no one ever called the Severn father, or praised her but for her grace; for she is like the body and soul of a princess straight from a western fairyland—so wild and pliant, so full of laughter and of mystery, so uncertain in her gay and sorrowing moods. On my word, though the science of education must be a very splendid thing, untaught, untrained, uninstructed as we Shrewsbury boys would now be considered, I would not change places with the most scientifically educated man in England who had never known a river such as that.

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A BALLADE OF PLACE

THERE was a time I thought to travel far,
Beyond the village, through the garden gate,
Down the white road, across the harbour bar,
And out upon the ocean desolate:
Oh, what a weariness it was to wait
Till I could push my little boat from shore,
And steer, a new Columbus, round the Nore,
Or follow Drake all flaming to Cadiz!
  But now I dream of wandering seas no more,
  There is no place but where my lady is.

Tell other men where other marvels are,
Where rites impenetrable consecrate
The glittering temple-domes of Candahar,
Or where the Pyramids, confronting fate,
Watch over Egypt's immemorial state;
Tell them of jewelled vaults in Travancore,
And bid them all the haunted bays explore
Of Asia, slumbering on her memories;
  For me who find what I have sought before,
  There is no place but where my lady is.

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Let down the mainsail, loosen every spar,
Drop the deep anchor, disembark the freight;
In all the sailor's heaven one only star
Lit me to port with promise passionate,
And all the log records one only date
When to her heart the ocean currents bore
Me toiling long at random with the oar.
If haply I might reach such isle as this,
  Where my soul lands and heaps her magic store,
  There is no place but where my lady is.

ENVOI.

Queen, to thy loveliness in love I pour
All love, like blood upon the temple's floor;
In mercy to thy lover grant as his
Love's only station, at thy bosom's door;
  There is no place but where my lady is.

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III

A DON'S DAY

"QUARTER past seven, sir," said the scout in a warning tone, as he splashed the water into the shallow bath one brilliant day of early June. "Breakfast in, sir? Yes, sir. The usual fish?"

"If you please, Chandler," said a gentle voice from the bed. "But no, stay a moment! Three of the junior students will take breakfast with me this morning at a quarter to nine."

"Scholars' breakfast? Yes, sir. Kedjeree and 'ashed chicking," muttered old Chandler, who had lived by robbing so many generations of undergraduates that he had won a reputation for genial and fatherly worth. "Beer?" he went on as he closed the door. "No; no beer. Bad for scholars is beer—very."

With a deep sigh, the sigh of a man returning from oblivion to unhappiness, Mr. Bretherton

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threw off the light bedclothes and got up at once.

"I shall be stronger for the effort," he said. For many years past he had said the same, and so it was that during term-time he had never been known to miss a morning chapel. That was his great distinction, and it was thought that the College had given him his fellowship on that account. The undergraduates, at all events, could discover no other reason.

The splash of the cold water, and the view from his window of the golden towers of Oxford standing in the summer air, filled him with a brief exhilaration. For a moment he felt something of the joy he had known fifteen years before, when as a freshman he had flung his window open to gaze upon that unequalled scene and realise that he was in Oxford at last. But in reaching for the towel, he caught sight of himself in the glass. It was a refined and even beautiful face — pale, clear-cut, and delicately marked by thought. He had once, after prolonged hesitation, allowed his beard to grow, had then cut it off in term-time, owing to some change in his point of view; had let it grow again in the Long Vacation, and after three

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years had recently shaved once more. He was now as clean as a priest. Ah yes! as a priest. He could see plainly enough how excellently he would have looked that part. The obvious fitness of his appearance was indeed one of the most trying temptations to his intellectual honesty. There was in his face almost sufficient austerity for sanctitude, and at the same time he had the priestly smile—that smile which says, "Look! In the midst of my unworldliness I retain my sympathetic charm!"

For that smile of ingratiating purity his features, with the subtle lines down the thin cheeks, were obviously made. The tall, slight figure, flat-chested, but fairly active still—the thin and faultless hands—all were sacerdotal. He knew it well. Each morning as he brushed his soft and semi-transparent hair, which parted down the middle as straight as a rubric, he saw with misery that only in the priesthood could a nature like his reach its fulfilment, and yet—and yet there seemed to him something wanting in the face. In others he recognised an illuminated look, as though in them a lamp of inward joy were always burning. The silver-tongued Canon had it; so had the stupid little cricketer—the latest

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of his own pupils to be ordained—ten years younger than himself, as he now remembered with a pang which brought down the brushes gently upon the fair white doyley. Was it possible that in the priesthood that look might come also to him; transfiguring his life as well as his face? That was the question, only that look was wanted, for every other quality seemed there. Why else did his freshmen pupils so frequently make the mistake of addressing him as "The Reverend" on their letters?

He began to put on his necktie, and it reminded him, as it always did, of a scrap of conversation he had once involuntarily overheard.

"I say," said one of his pupils to another, "I'm writing to the Brether, and I can't make out if he's a parson or not!"

"No, he can't well be a parson," said the other; "he wears a larky tie."

The poor man groaned aloud as he folded the neat sailor-knot of navy blue under the low, turned-down collar which had been the fashion when he was an undergraduate. And he groaned with real physical suffering as he stretched the

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thin watch-chain from one waistcoat pocket to the other, and arranged the plain gold cross so that it might hang exactly in the middle, pervading his whole presence with its memorial symbolism, and ever recalling to his mind the "soldier saints" of God, the Templar Knights and quiet martyrs who for it had flung away their lives without a question. He himself had given ten years of reading and thought to the decision whether he could take Holy Orders with full moral and intellectual justification, and after ten years he was still wearing both the "larky tie" and the cross upon his waistcoat. The sight of those equally balanced ornaments, which had to be put on every morning, sent a pang through him, as when a giant dies.

As he carefully ordered the folds of his Master's gown, and crossed the old quadrangle with its crumbling walls and brilliant flower-boxes, so quiet in the morning sun, and greeted his fellow dons at the cathedral door, and passed up the long aisle between the rows of clean-faced youths, so eager with life, who could have divined that within that innocent and conscientious personality was hidden a soul suffering tortures compared to which all the

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devices of the Inquisition, all the cruelties of ancient Barbary, would have been welcomed as a relief?

At breakfast the three scholars duly appeared, the kedjeree and hashed chicken were served, and the eights discussed as usual. Then came one of those terrible pauses which Mr. Bretherton was always dreading at his own table, and which always came. He knew that his pupils dreaded them too, and that their pitying indifference to himself was increased by their frequency. He struggled piteously to find something to say, but what could it be? The one subject for which he cared was never mentioned now, for there was a tacit agreement in the College never to speak to Mr. Bretherton about the Church. So it was like the relief of a siege when one of the scholars suddenly said, "I suppose you've been to the agricultural show, sir?"

A vision of bloated animals and garish machines among a litter of sawdust and straw made the tutor shiver in spite of himself. Yet the question gave him an opportunity of introducing a piece of practical knowledge of which he was rather proud, and he answered rapidly, "No, Mr. Poole, I fear I have hitherto neglected that duty.

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But I fully recognise the encouragement of that display as a duty, and I am sure Professor Green would support my opinion. To take a concrete instance: the lower classes, as you know, subsist almost entirely upon bacon, and they much prefer that bacon which is called streaky on account of its parallel layers of fat and lean. Now streaky bacon, as it is called, is produced entirely by the black or Berkshire pig, and it is therefore of the highest economic importance to encourage the multiplication of this species, and that, I am given to understand, is among the final causes of the Agricultural Society now holding an exhibition."

He could himself no longer remember where he had obtained this information, but it represented his hold upon the realities of life, and he cherished it. The Brether's theory of the Berkshire pig was a tradition in the College, and as he thus enunciated it anew, the scholars did not dare to look at each other, but became deeply engrossed in the breakfast. At last, to break a pause which was growing more awkward than ever, one of them, known as "the Gipper," gasped out—

"I wonder whether that distinction would hold

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for black men and white men as well as for white and black pigs?"

Both the other scholars laughed outright, and to save the situation one of them suggested—

"Perhaps our Mission to West Africa will find that out!"

But the remark was unfortunate, and Mr. Bretherton flushed painfully. He did not understand the real cause of the merriment, and he felt very keenly the irreverence towards the new mission, just founded by a heroic brotherhood of Anglicans from the College.

"Surely, surely," he began in expostulation, and then he stopped abruptly, for worse even than irreverence he hated to be thought donnish.

"I'm afraid I must be off, sir," said the Gipper, springing up. "I'm in for Ruds in half an hour, and I want to run through the Kings and Parables."

The party rose, and with an offer of cigarettes to show his wide humanity, Mr. Bretherton dismissed them, saying he supposed it was nearly time for lectures.

When he was alone, he stood looking with vacant eyes at the brilliant green of the lime trees that hung over the wall of the Deanery garden.

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"Ruds!" Instinctively he knew that the pass examination in the "Rudiments of Faith and Religion" was meant. In his day (not so very long ago after all) it was called "Divinity," and he well remembered the spirit in which he went in for that examination himself. Most of the scholars had treated it as a pleasant relaxation from the serious work of reading for "Greats." They gave three days to coaching up the Biblical history, repeating the shorter Articles to each other, and getting the miracles and parables off by heart with the help of indecent rhymes. His own method had been very different. For weeks before, he had carefully studied the Jewish history and the Greek Testament. He had attempted to arrive at the meaning and origin of the Articles in the light of history and the Reformation. When the day came he had entered the old "Schools" with a purifying sense of consecration, and had written his answers as carefully as a monk copying a missal. As a result the examiner who hustled him through his "Viva" had told him there was enough on his papers to secure his "Testamur," and when shortly afterwards he went in for "Greats" and only got a second, his failure was charitably put down by

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his tutor to the time he had wasted over Divinity. And now it was "Ruds"!

Profoundly depressed, he turned to put on his gown again, for the undergrads were beginning to arrive for his ten o'clock lecture, and it was some relief when they were all settled round the long table with their notebooks. He was discoursing on the Odyssey and the laws of art to be deduced from it. The lecture was old—all his lectures were old, for he had long been too much occupied with one absorbing question to compose anything fresh. But of this particular lecture he had always felt rather proud. It was based on Donaldson and other learned works; in one place he even quoted a German authority in the original, and one piece of criticism he believed to be entirely his own. It was on the very first line of the Odyssey, and when he came up to it he read part of that familiar line first:

Ἀνδρά μοι ἔννεπε Μοῦσα πολύτροπον.

"Now what," he asked, "do you observe about the form of that opening invocation?"

As usual his pupils made no suggestion, but looked out of the window or examined the photo-

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graphs of Holman Hunt and Fra Angelico round the walls.

"Surely, surely," he went on, in answer to himself, "you cannot fail to observe the very prominent position of the word Ἀνδρά. And from that we might surely learn, might we not? that the subsequent poem is all about a man?"

He was pleased to see that some of his hearers took the remark down, though none were very deeply impressed. But suddenly one of the most attentive looked up and said, "But don't you find, sir, that the women and girls are the most interesting parts of the Odyssey?"

The others just glanced at each other, and tried hard not to laugh, but the questioner's face was perfectly guileless, and in support of his point he hastily named the beautiful episodes: Helen, with her silver basket and violet wools; the nymph, Calypso; Circe, the witch; Penelope herself; and Nausicaa, with her washing and game of catch.

Mr. Bretherton was confused. As it was his own piece of criticism, he had no authority to fall back upon. Besides, he had never considered women one way or other; they did not enter into his problem, but the air of stifled

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amusement among the audience suddenly woke in him the knowledge that their thoughts were on the verge—the very verge of vulgarity. On the other hand he saw that in some sense the young scholar was right, and at once he felt his own mind beginning to totter round the circle of hesitation. After a tormenting pause, he murmured a shuffling concession, and concluded the lecture without even the ghost of spirit which haunted it before.

In the second hour he fared no better. He was lecturing on Greek syntax, and had reached the various uses of οὐ μή and μὴ οὐ, with the different moods required according to the construction and shade of meaning. It was a subject on which he could trust himself to speak without a thought of doubt or reservation, and the security gave him courage. But that morning nothing would go right. While the other students were piously taking down his rules and instances (chiefly derived from Dean Farrar's book) he noticed the pen of one of them moving rather strangely, and against his will he caught sight of a picture of two enormous cats, hastily limned on the paper with bristling splashes of ink. With backs arched and white eyes flashing, they

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stood on opposite chimney-pots, with a gulf between. One chimney was labelled "optative mood," the other "conjunctive mood," and from the mouth of one cat issued the syllables "οὐ μή"; from the other came the deprecating cry "μὴ οὐ." Across the bottom the undergrad was just inscribing the words "Memoria Technica," but feeling himself watched he pushed the drawing gently under his neighbour's notebook, and went on writing for dear life. Mr. Bretherton paused, flushed, and said nothing. He could not decide whether it was the coarseness of the idea or the slight to himself which made him suffer the more. Besides, the idea of discipline was singularly abhorrent to him, and it was one of his terrors to be thought a schoolmaster. In reproof, too, there always lurked the possibility that he might be wrong himself.

Between twelve and one, a scholar came with a wooden translation of Thucydides, and a passman with an Ode of Horace. That hour's work always reminded Mr. Bretherton of the earlier days when he had encouraged his pupils to bring him weekly essays in philosophy, and had thus incurred the surprised displeasure of the other dons, who were alarmed lest the habit should

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become general, as it was at Balliol. They need not have feared. After a six weeks' struggle, finding it impossible to answer his pupils' questions with certainty, Mr. Bretherton had quietly given it up and let things slide like the rest.

One point of difference alone he retained, and perhaps it was that which won him the standing epithet of "conscientious." Every term he took each of his pupils one dull walk. During the walk it would be hard to say whether he or the pupil suffered the greater torment, and he himself could never quite decide that question, though he often dwelt upon it. Among the undergrads a "Brether's grind" was a proverb of horror, and a mathematical scholar had worked out the average cost of every word spoken in terms of the tutorial fees.

Looking at his hanging diary, in which these walks and the saints' days were the only entries, Mr. Bretherton found that for that afternoon he had invited the very scholar who had talked about the agricultural show and going in for "Ruds." Chilled by the dreariness of uninspired duty, he was sinking into the cushioned window-seat, when his scout's boy came in with a note. It was to say the scholar very much regretted

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he could not come that afternoon, as he had a very important engagement with his people.

"Lunch in, sir?" asked the boy.

"If you please, William."

"Usual commons, sir?"

"If you please, William," and the boy set off, whistling, to the buttery.

With a slackening of mind very like pleasure, Mr. Bretherton realised that if he decided to go out that afternoon, he would at all events be alone. But he was inclined not to go out; he would stay and read till chapel, and then he would be better fitted to consider his own position in the evening. When lunch was over, however, the sound of the men passing under his window to cricket or the eights made him restless, and he determined to take Seeley's *Natural Religion* and read it in the fields. But before he reached Canterbury Gate he began to doubt whether he was in a fit mood to face that overwhelming conception of nature, unconscious, unanswering, unfathomable, so he turned back, and, taking up *Lux Mundi* instead, he started in an opposite direction, and passing through "Tom," found himself wandering over "Jacob's Ladder" to the Hinckseys.

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When he reached the foot of the Happy Valley, he sat down under a tree hidden from the path and began to read. Some farm people were making hay through the hedge behind him, and the sound of their rakes in the newly mown grass mingled soothingly with their voices. In front lay the city, orange in the broad sunshine. She needed not June, but June was over her now. Yet when he looked up from the book his eyes saw nothing but the horror of that choice which stood before him almost as a visible shape, like an equally poised balance on the point of a sword. The happy-seeming fields, the elms heavy with summer, the quiet water moving under the willows, only added to his misery. He turned to read again, and for a moment the balance did seem definitely to swing one way. Could it be the joy of assurance that he felt? He reflected, and in his heart he knew at once that if he had brought the other book, the other scale would have gone down. Then he looked up again, and with a sharp physical pang perceived that the balance stood before his eyes as usual, with arms equally poised.

Just then the voices through the hedge came nearer, and he listened to them unconsciously,

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till to his surprise he heard half-jestingly recited, the familiar words :—

"Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot,
In doubtful dreams of dreams ;
I watched the green field growing,
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams."

"Whatever's all that you're saying, Mr. Scholard?" said the bright voice of a girl.

Still laughing, but speaking with hurried eagerness, the man recited those other lines:—

"To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
Sweet lips, if love could fill."

"O, Lord, Mr. Scholard!" said the girl, "what things you do say!"

Through the hedge Mr. Bretherton could see two figures leaning on their rakes side by side in the hay. The girl had just stopped her work, and was holding up her hand for a thorn or splinter to be pulled out. As she looked up with smiling and trustful affection, her face was rosier

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than her pink sun-bonnet. Her bare arms, brown and red with the sun, a few early poppies hanging from the opening of her bodice—all of her seemed to burn with life. Over her hand the man was stooping tenderly. He had knotted the girl's crimson scarf round his head, but he wore the dark blue blazer and embroidered cardinal's hat of Christ Church, and his strong and hairy legs could be seen below the rolled-up flannels. Mr. Bretherton knew at a glance that it was "the Gipper," the very scholar who had refused his invitation to a walk owing to a most important family engagement. He had lately heard that the nickname of "the Gipper," an affectionate contraction for "Scholar Gipsy," had been given, because summer and winter the man was out every day with the shepherds and ploughmen in the fields, and used to greet the country-people by name as they drove into the city market while he was going to lecture, and this thing that he saw—this incredible situation—a Junior Student of the House, sure of his Firsts, associating with a farm-girl—this was the result, or perhaps the object of all that eccentricity!

What was to be done now? Visions of Deans and Censors and even of Senior Proctors passed

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rapidly through Mr. Bretherton's mind. Then, to avoid scandal, he thought he would himself talk seriously to the man that evening after all, and perhaps induce him to join in prayer. But the thorn was taken out now, and as "the Gipper" wiped away the tiny speck of blood with his handkerchief, the girl smilingly put up her rosy face. Mr. Bretherton turned away and hid his head between his knees. Then he heard two rakes fall to the ground, one after the other.

When the sound of tossing the hay began again, he rose and climbed the stile into the field, resolved to look neither to the right nor left, but to allow his mere presence to act as a warning and reproof. He passed so close that he was sure his device must be obvious—so close that as he walked slowly along, he heard the girl whisper, "Who's that funny old gaffer?" And he heard the Gipper's warning "Hush!"

By what road he reached the shelter of his own rooms he could not have told, but once there, he sank into his deep easy-chair, and remained with closed eyes and quivering nerves till the scout's boy brought him his afternoon tea. Then the quiet sound of the cathedral bell began, and it carried with it some sense of comfort. The

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service seldom failed to soothe him with its mere routine, the knowledge that no choice was needed and no change possible. It was so refreshing to kneel without question, to stand up without question, and to turn to the east without hesitating whether to turn to the west. He submitted himself to the unvarying ritual like a hospital patient who has to be washed and fed and given his medicine in definite routine, and so is saved the anguish of decision. But that afternoon, as he passed to his seat in the stalls across the marble mosaic of Fortitudo with her sword and lion, he noticed for the first time that his feet seemed to shuffle and scrape upon the pavement. Close behind him he heard the clatter of old Wilson's boots—old Wilson who had resigned his Orders years ago because he could believe in no future life but eternal damnation, and had been so poor ever since that he wore hobnails in his soles, to the horror of the vergers. But old Wilson at all events walked with a good clean stamp, though he was much older than Mr. Bretherton—nearly forty years older than the man who had just been called a funny old gaffer. So to-day the familiar service passed over Mr. Bretherton almost unnoticed, and he hardly heard

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the boys' clear voices chanting so glibly the Psalmist's uncertain moods of hope and despondency. Not even the cheerful old organist plunging at random up and down the keys and stops could penetrate his gloom, or draw him from the abyss of his introspection.

At the cathedral door an undergraduate came up timidly and asked him if he would not come that evening to a meeting of the West African Mission—the same which had been mentioned at the morning's breakfast, and was better known among the undergraduates as the Crocodile's Comfort.

"I almost think I should like to come, unless, indeed, I am too much occupied," said Mr. Bretherton, who was always deeply touched if an undergraduate took any notice of him.

But before he reached "Peck," a sharp internal pain warned him that he had unconsciously begun to hesitate. He was in doubt whether he ought to go to that meeting or not. It would break in upon the two hours which he habitually gave up to spiritual meditation in the evening, and the time which he gave to himself was so short and broken already. During term the work with which he loaded himself was chiefly

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irrelevant to the great question. Even during vacation he took a reading-party to the Lakes, and made a point of looking at Italian pictures abroad so as not to be reduced to absolute silence in the company of the other dons or of a Canon's wife and the few other ladies whom he met on rare occasions. Yet he recognised how much his time was frittered away by duties such as these, and he looked with wistful envy at the more resolute of his fellows, who, except for a few months of European travel, kept themselves free from all the petty bonds and ties of daily occupation, and so were enabled to devote almost their entire existence uninterruptedly to the pursuit of truth alone.

When he reached his rooms, the trammels in which fate and conscientiousness held him bound seemed embodied in the presence of two undergraduates, who had brought him their innocent burlesques of Latin prose. They were sporting men, who wore spats, contemplated him loftily through single eyeglasses, and sat his chairs like horses. Their answers to his comments ran like this—

"Oh yes, passive, certainly; I meant to put passive, didn't you, Finlayson? I remember

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telling you, feminine mood, perfect tense. Laudo, first conjugation, is it? Why didn't you tell me that, Stewart? I'd have got it right. I know the first conjugation. Oh, that's oratio obliqua! I know; it's when one fellah tells another fellah what the other fellah said. Accusative and infinitive, certainly. Rather a neat dodge of doing it, don't you think? Here, Stewart, I say, rein up a minute till I cock in an infinitive of sorts!"

When at last they went back across the quad, shouting "Yoicks" and "Gone away" and other incitements to the chase, it was time to dress for Hall.

One of the most grievous trials of Mr. Bretherton's day was the question whether it was better to go to Hall early or late. If he went early, all the scouts and kitchen-boys could stare at him as he passed up to the high table, and when he reached it he felt very conspicuous waiting for the other dons, and he was afraid the undergraduates would think he came early because he had nothing better to do. But if he went late, all the tables could look at him, and the high table itself seemed to rake his approach with a broadside of eyes. Besides, most of the

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places were taken by then, and he could not give those who disliked him a chance of avoiding the next seat to his. What he liked best was to meet Canon Liddon or Canon Hollings at the foot of the staircase, and so sail up Hall under shelter, illuminated indeed by a kind of reflected glory, for it was pleasant to be seen on intimate terms with men like them.

But that evening he had no luck. Not seeing any of the notable dons coming, he lingered, and so almost ran into an anomalous Master of Arts, who had proved himself too intolerable a bore even for the high table, and had been banished to a little side-table by himself. Instinctively Mr. Bretherton turned sharply round, as though he had left his handkerchief in his rooms. But before he had gone twenty yards remorse at his want of charity seized him, and he almost ran back in pursuit; but the bore had vanished, and after hesitating a few moments longer, Mr. Bretherton entered the Hall alone and late. He could never quite determine whether it was better to walk up that long stone pavement slowly or fast. If he walked fast he attracted more attention, and, besides, it might be thought that he was imitating Canon Hollings, who always

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sprang over the ground like the feet that bring good tidings, and the whole young High Church party, in imitation of him, seemed to leap for joy as they walked. On the other hand, if he went slowly the ordeal lasted longer, and there was more danger of overhearing the undergraduates. He was on the whole inclined to think that Canon Liddon's pace was the most suitable. It was fairly rapid, but markedly unobtrusive. The steps were very short; the toes slightly turned inwards; the head a little stooping and thrust forward. The smile in the eyes and the charm about the lips, as though they were always on the point of uttering some golden word, were beyond Mr. Bretherton, but the rest he could manage; and arranging his gown so that it might hang with exact equality on both sides, he started on the familiar course with the dread of an uncomely girl who enters her first ball-room.

Up between the lines of men he went, rather adroitly eluding the scouts who hastened about with dishes, but striving to keep his eyes steadily fixed on the portrait of Henry VIII. above the high table. The commoners were safely passed, and then came the two tables of scholars, each

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divided about the middle by an invisible but absolutely impassable barrier, to one side of which the "smugs" were restricted — the scholars, that is, who as a rule did not shave, wore comforters in winter, and studied science, or else belonged to the Evangelical party. As he went by he saw a classical scholar nod significantly to the Gipper, and from a dim sense of suppressed conversation he knew that his wretched afternoon was already a published comedy. It was some relief to think that the "smugs" would not understand it.

Mounting the few steps to the high table, he sank into the only vacant chair like a hart that finds the water brooks. But the high table that night was small and grumpy. Conversation was always difficult, and an inexperienced young don had now made it impossible by announcing that Mr. Ferguson, the lecturer on Aristotle, was going to publish his edition of the Ethics. Mr. Ferguson had been labouring at that edition for so many years that all had reasonably hoped it would never appear. It seemed unfeeling of one of their own number to accomplish anything. It was almost a breach of faith, and they could not understand how modest Ferguson, of all

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people—a man of no social advantages—should have the bad taste to expose himself to the criticism of themselves and the University. The young don, who had himself lately written a magazine article on Botticelli, saw his mistake and wondered. Next him sat a middle-aged don, who in his hot youth had written a treatise to prove the Ascension to be an astronomical impossibility, and because the High Church party did not abandon Christianity on that account, had embraced perpetual martyrdom. At his side was a clerical don, who had published selections from the Fathers and the Greek Anthology, and was thought a likely bishop. On the opposite side of the table were Mr. Bretherton, a classical don who had collated a manuscript in Berlin and was supposed to know all about dogs, a beautiful don who was supposed to know all about Shelley, and the president of the table—an elderly clergyman, who was supposed to know nothing.

Mr. Bretherton did his best to harden himself into conversation, for if he remained silent he grew so uneasy that at last he could hardly raise his eyes from his plate. But, unhappily, the president started the theme of the reduced incomes

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now derived from college livings. It was the only subject he ever started anywhere, but Mr. Bretherton was always sure he brought it up as a personal taunt, as though that were the reason that prevented him taking Orders. Quite unconscious of offence, the president pursued his wonted way, and Mr. Bretherton shuddered through the courses, each mention of the word "living" producing in him a sharp spasm of dyspepsia.

When at last hall was over, he sat for a time in the Common Room, pretending to read the *Church Times*, and then with a forced smile excused himself on the plea of attending the mission meeting. He went twice past the door of the rooms in "Tom" where the meeting was being held. He even knocked gently, hoping all the time he would not be heard, and as his knock was drowned by the voices inside, he turned away on tiptoe, and crept back to his own rooms.

Even for him it had not been a successful day. As he lighted the reading-lamp and put on his old boating-coat, he wondered why it had been, if anything, worse than usual. By force of habit he opened Dr. Wakefield's *Bampton Lectures* on

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"The Atonement in the Light of Modern Psychology," as being one of the books from which he looked for guidance upon the decision that was to make or mar his life. And for a while he read carefully on, struggling as usual to have the courage of other people's convictions, and at the same time making elaborate notes of all the possible objections that occurred to him. This had been his practice for years past, and on this method he had perused several hundredweight of theology. In fact, he had now gone so far that the amount of his objections on either side probably about equalled the arguments produced on the other.

But to-night, when he had satisfactorily finished the lecture on "Vicarious Sacrifice and Moral Responsibility," he came to "The Will in Matters of Belief," and there he could not get on at all. Through page after page he read the words, but all the time his mind was watching an unbidden procession of the day's hateful episodes. They came in turn, and each was accompanied by a little stab of physical pain. But as they began from early morning and passed slowly on to afternoon, he knew that the worst was yet to come, and then with a pang like a sword driven

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through his body he again beheld the girl leaning on her rake, and overheard again her terrible question. She had called him an old gaffer, and he knew instinctively that in the hell of age women sit as judges. Hitherto he had been too much occupied with other tortures to think much about growing old. He was still only in a state of preparation, still considering what his true career was to be—that career which he was ready to begin the moment that his intellectual position was unassailable. Unassailable? He looked at his book and at his own elaborate commentary, which was creeping on through one notebook after another. He thought of all he had read and had still to read. He thought of the number of important books which kept appearing year by year upon this very problem. His uncertainty might go on for years yet, and old age lay in front of him, no longer so very far away. He sank under the picture of his never-ending torment. His face flushed with the anguish of it, the bodily suffering of it twisted him in his chair, and his soul quivered like the flesh of a flayed man.

Then the procession of the day's episodes began to move on again, and he saw himself

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knocking feebly at the door of the mission meeting, hoping he would not be heard, and stealing away on the strength of that contemptible excuse. He was terrified at his own impotence. The cowardice of his self-distrust was now devouring all that was good in his nature. He had really promised to go to that meeting, and never before had he failed in his engagements. Certainly he owed the mission some reparation. He would subscribe to it, and subscribe largely. He would bequeath to it his large theological library. He would make it an immediate donation of £50. He would present it with an altar-cloth for the mission-church, or with a stained-glass window illustrating the legend of St. Frideswide, the patron saint of Christ Church. He would have the Stations of the Cross set up along the approach to the new buildings. He would endow a bed in the proposed hospital, or build a lychgate to the cemetery. He would give a gorgeous banner for the black procession, and incense-burners for the little acolytes. He would perhaps go to visit the mission himself one "Long." He would——

A sudden thought sounded through his being like an alarum to arms. For a moment it almost

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deafened him with its insistent blare. It made his heart stand still, like the first boom of the guns in battle. Then the full absurdity of it struck him, and almost made him laugh. How the whole College—high table and all—would shout with derision if they only knew that such an idea had even entered his mind! No; his service must be limited to gifts and subscriptions. Nothing more could possibly be required of him. For a man of his habits and tastes and sensitive health, that other idea was really too ludicrous. Shaking it off almost irritably, he turned to the *Bampton Lectures* again with the contented sigh of a sow returning to the mire. But still he could not read. After a page or two of meaningless phrases, the words began to dance up and down, taking the form of little black people with arms that waved him a grotesque welcome.

He sprang from his chair and walked to and fro about the room, wiping the sweat from his forehead. This was becoming worse than ridiculous: it was horrible. He looked at himself in the picture-glass of Holman Hunt's "Scapegoat," and wondered if he was going insane. That ludicrous idea which had stolen unasked into his

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mind seemed to possess him now. He grappled with it as though to shake it off, but it only clung the tighter.

Frightened at himself, he went hurriedly to the open window and looked out, in hopes that the sight of men and the familiar world would restore his sanity. It was late; there stood the Oxford spires, silently watching in the moon. As though animated with the spirits of the great souls who had lived in their shadow, they seemed to watch what he himself would do. What if even now, at the last moment, it should be granted him to join the number of the great-hearted, and fill some little gap in the ranks of those warrior-saints? He trembled with terror at his own daring, so incredible for him—poor Bretherton, the don, who was certain of nothing but the uses of two Greek particles—seemed the prospect of such glory.

In a fever of excitement—the wild absurdity battling for life against the disciplined battalions of his habits and apprehensions—he walked up and down his room again. Bit by bit he felt the ludicrous monster gaining ground, till at last prudence warned him to abandon the conflict for

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that night, and go to bed as usual, in the hope of awaking sane. He obeyed her, and began to undress. He would sleep, and sanity would come with waking. Sanity! Yes, but, sane or not, how could he survive the waking to such another day as this had been—this and hundreds before—now that this brief blaze of light had illuminated his soul? He could not endure the thought. Standing solemnly in his shirt-sleeves, he prayed that rather than that he might die before morning.

Then he slowly unfastened the "larky tie," and folded it on the dressing-table with the tenderness one feels for an enemy whom some great deliverance shared in common has made a friend. Only once again was his mind shaken: it was when in the looking-glass he caught sight of himself in his nightgown, his thin legs visible below the knees, and his thin chest appearing through the opening down the front. That reflected figure certainly did look singularly unheroic.

But never mind! He could give up nightgowns, and in tropical climates it was probably better to be too thin than too fat. With a beating heart and a buoyant sense of glory, he

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plunged into bed, and all night long joy sat sleepless on his pillow.

"Quarter past seven, sir," said old Chandler next morning in a warning tone as he poured out the bath-water, making a fine rattle with the can. "Breakfast in, sir? Yes, sir. The usual fish?"

"Yes, please, Chandler," said the gentle voice from the bed. "But stay a moment," it added suddenly; "no, Chandler, not the usual fish to-day."

The old scout stood staring with the empty can in his hand.

"Did you say *not* the usual fish, sir?" he asked, almost threateningly.

"If you please, not," was the emphatic answer; "anything in the world except the usual fish."

"I don't like the looks on it," whispered old Chandler to the boy outside the door. "I always was afeard as this is what it might come to."

That evening it was known in Hall that the Brether had volunteered to go as chief lay-helper to the Crocodile's Comfort, and had been accepted.

"I wonder if the crocodiles will find him a

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pleasant change after the streaky niggers," said the Gipper.

And all night long the College laughed. There seemed no end to the absurd situations that might be realised on the Niger, with the Brether as hero. Even the "smugs" laughed too.

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ST. JOHN OF AMIENS

In the fair church of Amiens
There lies the relic of St. John,
Some say it is the skull of him
Beheaded, as the gospels tell,
By Herod for a woman's whim,
What time her daughter danced so well.
(St. John the Baptist, ever blest,
Bring me to his eternal rest.)

But some adore it as the head
Of John Divine, the same who said,
'My little children, love each other,'
And lay upon Lord Jesu's heart,
And took in trust the Blessed Mother,
Till she in glory did depart.
(St. John Divine, the son of love,
Preserve me to his peace above.)

For John the Baptist's head, they say,
Was broken up in Julian's day;
One bit is in Samaria's town,
And two beneath Byzantium's dome,
And Genoa has half the crown,
The nose and forehead rest in Rome.
(St. John the Baptist's scattered dust
Bring me to kingdoms of the just.)

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But there are others say again
St. John Divine escaped the pain
Of death's last conflict, for he lies
Still sleeping in his bishopric
Of Ephesus, until his eyes
Shall ope to judgment with the quick.
(St. John Divine, who sleeps so fast,
Wake me to paradise at last.)

For me, a poor unwitting man,
I pray and worship all I can;
Sure that the blessed souls in heaven
Will not be jealous of each other,
And the mistake will be forgiven
If for one saint I love his brother.
(St. John Divine and Baptist too,
Stand at each side whate'er I do.)

And so that dubious mystery
Which of the twain those relics be,
I leave to God; He knows, I wis;
How should a thing like me decide?
And whosesoever skull it is,
St. John, I trow, is satisfied.
(May God, who reads all hearts aright,
Admit my blindness to His sight.)

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IV

SIC VOS NON VOBIS

AS a free lance in journalism, Edward Morton was doing fairly well. He had wide sympathies, embracing literature and the drama, politics, and even statistics. In fact, he was ready to embrace anything that showed a hope of progress or elevation, and had acquired a rather remarkable store of general knowledge—a possession worth having in journalism alone. He never made slipshod mistakes or exposed a newspaper to the feline interjections of her contemporaries. His "stuff" was always written in a strong and concise style, always up to time, always the right length, and as easy to read as print. So editors liked him, and if sometimes he showed traces of an unaccountable depth of passion or originality, they had little difficulty in cutting all that out, as being incomprehensible to themselves and their readers.

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He lived on the second floor of a lodging-house off Brunswick Square, and one morning in November, instead of being bent over his writing-table, as a journalist should be, he was crouching on his heels before his sitting-room fire, intently occupied with the contents of a frying-pan. With one hand he held it carefully just above the coals, where it would not smoke, and with the other he gently stirred, now and then putting in just a pinch of various spices and chopped herbs which he had arranged in a row upon the hearthrug. At last the golden yellow began to bubble and thicken. A few more stirs, a final taste from the wrong end of the spoon, and he lifted it delicately on to a white plate, which he first dusted back and front with a clean, folded pocket-handkerchief. Then he pulled a draggle-tailed bellrope, and a draggle-tailed girl appeared, sniffing and rubbing her red hands together. A grimy duster was bound under her chin and tied in a knot at the top of her head, so that the ends flopped about like a rabbit's ears.

"Miss Mathoney's breakfast's ready now," said Morton without looking round. "Have you got the tray?"

"Yus," said Sarah, taking up a worn tea-tray

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from the armchair, breathing on it, and polishing off the mist with her apron.

Morton turned to take it, and catching sight of the girl he cried, "What in the world is that you've got on your head?"

"Face-ache," said Sarah.

"Take it off at once."

"Shan't," said Sarah. "Ain't goin' to look like a suet puddin' not to please nobody."

"Well, you can't go up to Miss Mahoney with that thing on."

"Then yer can go up yerself," said Sarah, clattering the tray down on the table.

Morton looked into the fire and hesitated a moment.

"Is Miss Mahoney up and dressed?" he asked.

"Dressed she never is at this time of mornin'," said Sarah. "She just slips on somethink red and sets warmin' her toes and eatin' her breakfast and readin' and doin'. Work, she calls it! Why, she don't so much as catlick her own room, if it wasn't for me scrubbin' and sousin' once a week, and her settin' on the table with her feet tucked up to keep 'em dry. But if yer mean up, yus, she *is* up. Anyways she's been chuckin' the water about fit to drowned 'erself."

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Sarah drew breath and remained motionless as an automaton run down.

"All right, Sarah," said Morton, "you can't go up looking like that. You'd frighten her to death!"

"Frighten yerself!" cried Sarah, and putting her hand to her cheek, she vanished with a sniffle.

For a moment longer Morton hesitated. "It was on Tuesday I saw her last," he said to himself, "that time we met at the door by accident —really by accident—and to-day's Saturday. She could hardly think that too often. And after all, it couldn't seem queer for a lodger to bring up her things because the landlady's at Margate, and the slavey's ill. I'll just leave the tray and come away again."

Meantime he was delicately rolling the omelette into the recognised form. Then going to his collar-drawer, he took out another clean handkerchief and spread it over the tray. From the hob he lifted two earthenware pots of coffee and milk and a rack of toast. When all was ready, he scrutinised it with an eye to perfection.

"I suppose a flower of sorts is what it wants," he thought, "but that can't be helped. Besides,

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she'll be thinking of something else this morning. What glorious luck old Wilcox sending her book to me to review! The old swine doesn't often send what I ask him."

He went upstairs to the door above his own, making the china rattle to announce the approach of breakfast. He knocked and entered.

Sarah was quite right. The lady was there; she had something crimson on, and was sitting with her feet to the fire, and her back to the door. The firelight gleamed on her dark hair like the reflection of a flame on coal.

"Oh, my fine Ariel," she said, without turning round, "how sweet of you to be late! I was deliciously late myself, and now I'm so hungry and so happy. Light all the candles, please, dear. It's so lovely to have breakfast by candlelight; it's like being a child again. Quick, Ariel; where are the matches?"

She sprang up, and as she turned she saw it was not Sarah who was standing motionless with the tray.

"Very sorry, but Ariel's ill," said Morton, "so she thought perhaps you wouldn't mind if Caliban came on for a turn."

"O Mr. Morton, how very kind of you!"

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she said, while with her left hand she unconsciously drew the edges of the crimson something together.

"Sarah thought you would forgive me," Morton said again, as though Sarah were a standard work on etiquette. He put the tray on a little table by the fire, and struck a match on his trousers to light the candles.

"Oh, you are too good; I thank you with all my heart," she said, and gave him her delicate hand as though her heart were in it. "I believe it's all the fog," she went on, laughing. "I love a fog—a r-r-real fog. It makes everybody so amiable. It seems to put all London under one blanket."

"Not a wet blanket, or you wouldn't have said you were so happy to-day, I suppose," he answered, giving a final little tug to straighten his handkerchief on the middle of the tray.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, smiling over an inward joy. "Everything always makes me happy, except, of course, when I'm miserable."

"By the way," said Morton, as though suddenly remembering something, "I must congratulate you on the review of your book in last night's *Piccadilly*."

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"Oh, did you see that?" she asked, trying to hide her pleasure. "Wasn't it sweet of the editor to give me so much space? I should like to stroke the top of his old head. Oh, Mr. Morton, you know all about those things; do you think it said too much? It was so lovely, so sweet, so clever, too! And the best of it all is that it must be true, because it can't have been written by a friend. You see, nobody knows me, so it must be true."

"Well," said Morton, "I always thought the beauty of anonymous journalism was that one friend could abuse another and still be his friend."

"But I'm sure this wasn't a friend," she went on eagerly. "I only know one man who can write like that, and he's not a journalist. And what do you think the best of it all is? The *Metropolis* has taken a little sketch of mine! They wrote about it this morning. And it's all that review, I'm sure!"

"That's grand," said Morton, carefully pouring out the coffee. "But you mustn't let breakfast get cold."

"Yes, it's grand," she said, as she settled comfortably down to the table with a sigh of pleasure, "and, what's more, it's two pounds."

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"Twa poon' is twa poon'," said Morton, quoting the Byron farce of his childhood.

"That may be true for some people," she answered, "but to me two pounds is Africa and golden joys—for one day, at least. I've thought of my golden joy. You'd never guess."

"Rent, fire, dress, drink, or food?" said Morton. "Man wants nothing else here below."

"Oh, doesn't he?" she retorted. "Why, I want—I want everything else. But when you say food, you're getting warm, as the children say. I'm going to give a dinner."

"A dinner?" said Morton, involuntarily glancing at the little table, and then back at the bright jewel of crimson and kindling black beside it.

"Yes," she said, sipping the coffee he had roasted and ground so tenderly; "it will be superb! I thought it out in bed this morning as soon as the letter came. I'll get Nina Wyndham, and if she comes, Mr. Powell is as certain to be here as the tide to rise at full moon. And then there'll be you—you *will* come, won't you?" (She just put out one hand in invitation.) "And then—let me see. I should like to ask Mr. Martin Dale; don't you think I might?"

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"Certainly," said Morton, conscious only of his joy in looking at her; "he's a very good sort."

"Oh, don't say that," she answered; "he's so much more than that."

"I only meant he is beyond comparison the first of living poets," said Morton, with a smile.

"That's better, though it sounds like a review," she answered. "But there's one thing I want to ask you about: where shall we dine?"

"Well," he answered thoughtfully, "there are the eighteenpennies in Soho, and I know one where wine is included."

"O model of the virtuous apprentice! Do you think I'm going to feed my friends on eighteenpence when I've got two pounds?" She threw out her arms like a queen scattering golden largess to her populace.

"Well then," he said patiently, "at the Cloches you can go further and pay more, as the advertisements say."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried; "none of your stuffy restaurants for me—indistinguishable waiters and a smell of dinners immemorial! Anybody can

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buy a dinner; my Ariel can make one. We will dine here—here in my own room. I decided that long ago. She's a glorious cook, isn't she? This omelette's as perfect, as unexpected, as inevitable as—as—a lyric of Martin Dale's, let us say."

"I'm so glad," said Morton.

"Yes, my Ariel is superb," she went on. "Who would have thought the very soul of poetic cooking lay prisoned in that half-blooded little form, with tight hair, and such slippers too! But you say she's ill—my dainty spirit? I must take her to a doctor at once. She must be well by to-night at all costs."

"To-night?" repeated Morton.

"Certainly; we must have the dinner to-night," she answered. "Do you think I can keep two pounds for ever?"

"But your sketch isn't even printed yet."

"You mean I have not even yet the two pounds? You are quite right. You shall lend them to me. Money or no money, we must have the dinner to-night. I'm quite sure Mr. Martin Dale hasn't had enough to eat lately. It's all very well to be the greatest of living poets, but you must be kept alive for that, mustn't you? Think of being

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hungry—hungry and a poet! Why, I'd pawn my only frock—I'd do anything in the world to feed a hungry man, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, or even a hungry woman," said Morton, laughing; "anybody would."

"I'm sure they would," she answered. "Everybody is so sweet, really. But now I must send you away. I shall have to be busy for this evening."

"But couldn't I help you? Sarah really isn't fit for anything, and I have nothing on earth to do," said Morton, compelled to look down by the immensity of the fiction, and then fixing his eyes on two narrow and shapely feet just peering out under the crimson.

"Help me? Of course you shall," she answered, with her happy laugh; "you shall lend me all the things you've got, and then you shall go out into the fog and order everything in, like a fairy godmother—goldfish, and peacocks, and amaranth, and the bags of the honey-bee, or whatever else a poet would be likely to eat. And what about wine for him?"

"Well," said Morton, "Sauterne is said to give you a gentle melancholy, and Browning drank Chablis and actually made it rhyme with

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Rabelais! So either of those would do for a poet."

"Yes," she said, "something delicate and golden, to make us think we are sitting under vines that cover ancient walls on the bank of some storied river in the south. Or get Capri, and bid the white columns on a headland rise, where we, reclined on roses, cherish night!"

The wild little face strove in vain to mock a tragedy queen as she recited the words.

"Lend me a pencil, please," she went on, and, tearing off the margin of a newspaper, she began with an air of intense preoccupation to make out her list of requisites.

"There!" she said, handing it to him at last, "I always knew nature made me a housekeeper, and civilisation made me a three-pair-front. Think how glorious to keep a kraal, to feed and comfort my warrior when home they brought him alive! Do you think a flattering review is better than that? But now I must take Ariel to the doctor. I wonder have I got five shillings to pay him with? If not, I must pawn her as I go!"

The reflection of her face brightened the misty staircase as Morton went down to his room

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below. There he stood bewildered as a City clerk whose daily bearings have suddenly been upset by an earthquake. Neatly arranged on his writing-table lay his copy-paper—four and a half sides already covered with an article on the variation of the birth-rate according to the price of bread. It had to be in by next morning.

"But I can't do it now, I simply can't," he said, looking again at the margin of newspaper in his hand. "And yet she'll want money, she'll always want money. That's glorious—glorious!"

From his table-drawer he took out four or five cheques and chose the biggest. "That'll do," he said. "It was for that article, 'A nest of Singing Birds,' which almost made Martin Dale famous. That's just the thing, as the dinner is really for him."

As he put back the other cheques, he smiled with sudden happiness. "I know what I'll do," he murmured; "I'll open a banking account. Everybody who has anything to live for ought to have a banking account."

Then he ran out into the happy fog, that covered all London under one blanket, as he remembered.

From market to market he wandered, choosing

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the very best of everything, surpassing in daintiness even the delicate notes on his paper. His burden of rush baskets fastened with skewers, bottles of wine, and long rolls of chrysanthemums and Riviera roses grew so fast that he had to take a four-wheeler, and go crawling about through the smoky darkness, himself all aflame with impatience and a secret joy almost too tender to be looked at.

Plunging into the depths of the kitchen, he laid the things one by one upon the table, and there by the firelight he beheld Sarah whimpering with self-pity, and looking more incapable and unkempt than ever; while at her side a sweet and pliant form was kneeling and gently sponging the woebegone face with hot water from a saucepan.

"Is that you, Mr. Morton?" said Miss Mahoney, without turning round. "I'm so glad you've come. Poor Sarah has been suffering unspeakable things. But it'll soon be better; it's all over now."

"No, it ain't all over," sobbed Sarah. "I can feel the soft place with my tongue, and it keeps on bleedin'. Oh, what would my poor muvver say if she caught sight on me now?"

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She was determined to make the utmost of sympathy's unaccustomed luxury.

"Come, stop that noise, there's a good girl," said Morton, with cheerful firmness, "and look at all these nice things I've brought you to cook."

"Can't cook; yer know that well enough," Sarah squeaked out; but still she stopped her wailing and mopped her eyes and nose with a ball of handkerchief as she watched Morton light the gas and spread the purchases out for exhibition.

"Oh, Sarah, your cooking is quite angelic. Now, do try to cheer up and forget all about it," said Miss Mahoney, gently sponging the whole of the poor, putty face, and wiping it with her own soft handkerchief.

"Don't want to cheer up, and ain't goin' to forget," said Sarah, greedy for such sweet woe.

"Now, Miss Mahoney," said Morton in his resolute, matter-of-fact voice, "if you would take the flowers upstairs, you can leave me with Sarah, and I'll help her as much as I can. It's rather a comfort the landlady's enjoying herself at Margate, isn't it? Are all three guests coming?"

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"Nina has telegraphed 'yes,'" said Miss Mahoney, smoothing Sarah's tangled wisp of colourless hair as she got up from her side, "so that Mr. Powell is certain. I've not heard from Mr. Dale, but I know he'll come. I mean, no one ever does hear from Mr. Dale," she added inconsequently.

"We haven't too much time," said Morton.

"I'm going," she answered. "I wish I could tell you how sweet it is of you to help us all like this, and you always so dreadfully busy too."

She was gone with the flowers, and all the shabby pots and pans hanging round the kitchen ceased to reflect light.

But the light was in Morton's heart, and danced and sparkled there through the afternoon. He closed the shutters, as it were, upon it, so that he might work the harder; but it was that shuttered radiance which made the work go so well and quickly, while, stripped of his coat and waistcoat, he boiled the soup and roasted the pheasants and mashed the potatoes and mixed the salad in a basin, giving all the while his quiet directions to Sarah, who obeyed like a tin soldier, and forgot all her woes in the excitement of seeing things come right.

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Just in time to wash and change for the dinner itself, he had everything ready down to the last touch of flavouring, and had made Sarah twice repeat her orders. As he entered the room above his own he found Miss Mahoney just coming out from her bedroom into the "furnished apartment," which she had made soft and fragrant with flowers and blended lights. She came quickly across the room to greet him.

"You and I must play host and hostess," she said, "because we two live under the same roof. I cannot thank you enough for all you have done. But then, one doesn't thank the host, I believe."

Morton held her hand and looked down at the slight and exquisitely graceful figure, whose head just reached to his chin. With his deep chest and great, square shoulders he felt he could lap her round and engulf her like a wave. But he only looked in silence, and for one moment the ecstasy of joy was his.

Someone knocked lightly at the door. "That's Nina," she whispered, and drew her hand away so softly that it seemed like a caress.

She ran to the door, and kissed on both cheeks the laughing, rosy, yellow-haired girl who entered

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—Nina Wyndham, a violent revolutionist and a valued contributor to the ladies' column of a weekly newspaper.

They had hardly passed into Miss Mahoney's room when Mr. Powell arrived, with a proximity just far enough removed to confirm any suspicion that he and Nina had come almost up to the front door together. He was a leader-writer on the *Morning Herald*—substantial in form, mind, and even in pocket. Characterised, rather than adorned, by common sense, he was born for complacent Conservatism and West-End clubs, where he would have shared the languid scorn of all hopes and ideas as sentimental and fatuous, had not his long and successful devotion to Miss Wyndham transformed him into an astonishing hybrid between a member of the Reform Club and a French Communard.

When Miss Wyndham came in again without her hat and cloak, she greeted him with a pleasurable surprise that deceived no one, not even herself, for she knew the others were aware they had parted hardly five minutes before. Then they all stood talking about various things, while each was thinking of something far more intimate.

In the midst, Sarah's head was thrust in at the

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door. "Please, miss," she said, "shall I dish up? The things is spilin'."

The growing shade of anxiety on Miss Mahoney's face deepened a little as she said, "Five minutes more, Sarah. You see, it's Mr. Dale," she added in apology to the others, while she touched the flowers on the table as though to arrange them just to perfection.

"Oh, everybody gives him at least an hour to be late," said Miss Wyndham, laughing, "and when he comes he is so perfectly delightful that everybody forgets it."

"That's true," said Morton heartily, at which Miss Mahoney smiled, and Mr. Powell looked rather bored, and said he supposed poets were quite different from other people.

Just as Miss Mahoney had rung the bell in despair, and Sarah had produced the soup in a big china bowl under a metal dish-cover that rattled ominously, a thin, dark figure seemed to slide into the room, though the door was hardly more than ajar, and with eyes all soft and brilliant Miss Mahoney went to greet him. Miss Wyndham gave them one quick look, as though she almost expected an electric spark to flash from their hands as they touched. Mr. Powell nodded

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rather patronisingly, and went towards his chair at the table. Morton, as usual, felt a certain shyness in the poet's presence, partly because of his extreme admiration. In that gaunt and ascetic young face, with the unruly hair and shy but passionate eyes, he saw the thing that was lacking in himself—the sign of that inward and spiritual grace which by one little touch would have converted his own high and serviceable talents into something rich and strange—oh, how infinitely beyond his present self!

With one quick thought all this passed through his mind as he sat down next to Dale at the table, and then like a flood of glory came the memory of all the sweetness of that day, of all the pleasant things he had been able to do in someone's service, and of her look when she gave him her hand. Surely with her inspiration to drive him on, he could rise to that level of the gods where this wild poet, with his unsaleable volume or two of exquisite verse, had stood secure from his birth, not needing the outside help even of the loveliest and most beloved.

The conversation was rapid, whirling round the successes or failures, and the charming or dreary qualities of absent enemies and friends,

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while amid a variegated emblazonment of drama, journalism, and bright visions of the speedy extinction of civilisation, the happy courses ran. Quite unmoved by the most startling proposals, and letting the rush of words pass over her like a summer cloud, Sarah tramped and panted along the line laid down by Morton's rules, occasionally pulling his coat-sleeve and whispering in his ear to make sure she was going right. But no one gave a thought to her or the courses whether they were right or wrong. Like love himself, they were too young to know what dinner is. All were at their wildest and best, nor had the Sauterne the effect of inducing that gentle melancholy which Morton had foretold. Martin Dale was especially magnificent, pouring out wild visions of beautiful absurdity, or telling of unearthly scenes and sayings which he had caught from another world than this; and to Morton his words seemed like strings of jewels full of gleaming light.

When the courses had fled, Dale proposed that they should drink the immortality of the earliest Egyptian papyrus to Miss Mahoney's book.

"May it be perused," he said, "six thousand years hence among the ruins of St. Pancras

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station, and may it give the dullard Germans of that date the entirely false impression that England was possessed of a peculiar charm such as never was upon her land or sea!"

"No, no," Miss Mahoney interrupted quickly, "let us leave all that, and drink only to the critic —the unknown critic! May he win his heart's desire, whatever it is!"

"To the unknown critic!" they all said.

"Splendid stuff it was, certainly," said Dale. "I believe," he added, turning to Morton, who was just superintending the coffee at the fire, "I believe you wrote that review, Morton!"

"Rot, my dear fellow!" said Morton, gently stirring the brown froth; "I'm only a journalist; you don't suppose I could touch imaginative work like that! Ask Powell."

"Well, I suppose a journalist can gas like other people if he chooses?" Powell retorted, rather sharply.

"Oh, please, please!" said Miss Mahoney; "don't let us have any of these guesses. My prince of reviewers! He is like a voice from an unknown planet. Do you think I want to picture him as a mere human being? No, not even as Mr. Morton himself."

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Morton was handing round the coffee in a mixed set of tea-cups. As Miss Mahoney took hers from him with just a word of thanks, she continued: "I can only pray once more that he may win the desire of his heart, whether it be the love of woman or Westminster Abbey."

It was half-past ten, and Powell had to get to Fleet Street for his leader-writing. He went rather awkwardly, for he liked to be thought important, and yet he knew that his daily routine of writing excluded him from art. Miss Wyndham went down to the front door with him, and returned helplessly smiling, to settle down into a deep armchair with just one little sigh of relief.

"Oh, we all love the man whom all women love," Miss Mahoney was saying.

"Give me an ogre all to myself," Miss Wyndham murmured again with a comfortable sigh.

"An ogre, certainly!" said Miss Mahoney, "on some wild Arabian islands, haunted with strange forms. But think of the thousands of poor creatures whose ogre is a middle-aged gentleman hurrying away from breakfast with a bag and an umbrella, and his trousers turned up.

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Oh, do not let us remind ourselves of horrors to-night!" she added, drawing up her chair between Dale and Morton, and shuddering as with cold at her terrible vision.

"Perhaps there are compensations," said Morton, glancing at a shy and inward picture of such a home as he could make for one—for one—even in a Brixtonian terrace.

"It is not of the least importance where you live," said Dale, "though it is of some importance who lives with you. But in the end the soul is always alone and dwells in immeasurable places. There's a fine, solemn sentence for you—quite a 'Treasure of the Humble'?" he added, laughing, as he looked down on Miss Mahoney's wild little head, resting upon both hands as she stared at the flames.

"Thank God, it's true," she murmured, and they all laughed at the far-away look with which she gazed from one to another and then round the dingy little walls, as though indeed she stood alone in the purple of eternity.

So the time passed, and to one of them it was as though he were caught up beyond the mortal world. He did not speak much; only now and then he put in some shrewd or humorous

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comment, or sent a rapid theory spinning with some plain and contrary instance. For himself, he only cared to feel the softness of a skirt that sometimes moved against him, and was happy if, without seeming to mean it, he could place his hand where it just touched the silken flow of a sleeve. So he could have sat throughout ages, and wished the night never to end.

But as it struck twelve, Miss Wyndham sprang up with a little cry at the lateness of the hour and the long way home.

"Oh, don't go yet," said Miss Mahoney, "don't let this evening end. Mr. Morton will see you back through the fog. He has never lost his way in all his life; I'm sure he hasn't."

But Miss Wyndham insisted. "Good-bye then, good-bye," said Miss Mahoney; "it's always good-bye. But we'll all meet here again—soon—soon."

"Even before the next review," said Morton, holding her hand just for a moment longer.

"Even before the next lovely review," she answered, looking up at him. "How nice it has been, and now it is all over."

"Oh, no; it is like yourself, a joy for ever," he said, laughing, as he ran downstairs after

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Miss Wyndham, calling for Dale, who had stopped in the passage for one last word.

But Miss Wyndham would not wait, and leaving the front door ajar they went back to her lodgings through the fog. On the way she talked all the time of Miss Mahoney, with loving praise and enthusiasm, and yet with an undertone of warning which he could not understand, and as they parted he noticed that she looked at him with a kind of pitying solicitude. She seemed to cling to his hand as though she would almost have drawn him through the door, and he suddenly became aware that for some hidden reason she would have tenderly acquiesced if he had caught her to his heart. As he looked into her eyes, something suddenly shook him till the very railings seemed to quiver.

"Good-bye, good-night," he said hurriedly as he sprang down the steps, letting the door slam behind him.

"Why is it? Why is it?" he muttered as he strode back. "She and Powell — everybody knows about it; they are real lovers in their fashion. And I—I who am so near the very radiance of the world—who am surrounded by a glory of light because of that——Cannot a man,

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then, be faithful for a single hour? Not for twenty minutes?"

He was back at his temple of the Crescent Moon. The door he found just ajar, as he had left it.

"Stupid of Dale!" he thought. "Did he suppose I should forget my latchkey? Or is it really impossible to be a poet without being a fool?"

Putting out the gas, he crept softly upstairs, so as not to disturb the house—so as not to disturb —but that was a thought he dared not venture on. In his own room he sat down beside a dying fire.

"Now I will finish that article," he thought. "Let me see: 'The Influence of the Price of Bread upon the Law of Population.' O Lord! O Lord! Why should people do these things?"

He paused for a moment, with his head between his hands and his eyes closed, enjoying his happiness as he recalled slowly the bright moments of the day. Then he plunged into statistics with that complete power of abstraction which made him so admirable a worker.

He had worked for nearly half an hour and was well on with the statement of his subject,

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when suddenly a sound overhead made his heart leap, though he went on calmly adding up a little column of figures. Someone was moving in the room above him. He wrote down the total of the sum, and then he listened. He could not help listening. The sound came again, and more distinctly. Someone walked a few paces. There was nothing remarkable in that! It was only a footstep—it was only—well, he surely knew who it was! And he turned to his work again with a throbbing pulse.

He had got half-way up the next column of figures when the sound was repeated, and, ceasing to count, he sat up rigidly in his chair. The footsteps now went backwards and forwards. It was not only the light step that he knew. Through the ceiling he almost seemed to watch the feet, and they were moving side by side—so close. And one footstep was light—so light—but the other heavier.

Then they were still. A piece of furniture was gently drawn forward towards the fire, and they were still.

Morton was as still as they—stiller even, for now and then he heard a faint sound overhead, but he never moved. With one glance at his

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half-finished work he sank together down into his chair as a corpse sinks, and that night he wrote no more.

A church clock seemed to strike the quarters almost without a pause, but he kept no record of their time. Only that at last, soon after some half-hour had struck, he again heard a footstep cross the floor. Then it went back again, stayed a long, long moment, and then the door was softly opened and softly shut, and the soft footstep crept down the stairs—noiselessly, had not two boards creaked. Quite noiselessly, too, Morton rose and turned out his gas, that the light might not be seen under his door. At all events, the lovers should never know they had betrayed to him their secret. Why should he drive the woman he adored into a corner like a rat?

The footstep stole across his landing, and fingers felt the way by touching his door. There was a silence, and then he heard the front door open and gently shut. The footsteps went briskly down the street. The man had evidently stopped to put on his boots at the bottom of the stairs and was gone.

For a short time Morton still heard gentle

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movements overhead. They were in front of the fireplace; once the fire was quietly stirred, and once two little slippers in succession fell on the hearthrug with muffled sounds. Then a softer step than any yet trod the thin carpet, and there was no more sound at all. The room above him was empty, as empty as a soul whose radiance has gone out and left it dark.

The first glimmering light of morning, when it came with a drizzling rain that mopped away the fog, found him still sitting there motionless in the gloom. Only when he heard Sarah crackling and creaking in the passage with her dustpan and wood, on her way to relight his fire, he suddenly sprang up, lit the gas, and continued to add up the column of figures just where he had left off.

"It's all right, Sarah," he said cheerily, as he heard the girl gasp at seeing him there. "I had to get up early to finish some work, because we were so busy yesterday."

"It ain't busy as I'd call it," said Sarah. "See my kitching! It's me as'll be busy washin' up and doin'."

"All right, Sarah," he said again, continuing to put down the figures with unfailing accuracy.

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"You shall eat everything that's left except what Miss Mahoney wants. But the first thing you've got to do is to put her room perfectly straight before she gets up. And the moment her bell rings you must let me know, and I'll make up the remains of the pheasants or something nice."

He turned back to his work, and finished it carefully to the last word, read it through again, checked all the figures, deliberated over some of his own suggestions, assured himself that the article was good, and directed it to the editor.

"She'll want a lot of things still," he thought to himself, "and she'll never know or think of asking where they come from. That's so magnificent! She has no suspiciousness or concealment or curiosity in her whole nature. She takes life as the young earth takes the spring."

It was nearly twelve before Miss Mahoney's bell rang. Morton prepared her breakfast, and took up the tray just as he had done the morning before. As he entered she sprang towards him, looking as fresh as a wild rose and as sweet. Again she took his hand and looked smilingly straight into his eyes.

"My dear comrade," she said, "how inex-

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haustibly kind you are! But oh, I do hope you enjoyed last night a little? I thought it all went perfectly, quite beautifully. It makes one happy to think of, and this morning I am wonderfully happy. I'm sure all of us are, and we owe it all to you—every bit of it—every bit!"

He looked again into the wild and lovesome little face so close to him.

"It's very sweet of you to say so," he answered, "and I only wish it were true."

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THE ROSE

(*A mediæval Citizen speaks*)

STEPHEN, clerk of Oxford town,
Oh, the weary while he lies,
Wrapt in his old college gown,
Burning, burning, till he dies!
And 'tis very surely said,
He shall burn when he is dead,
All aflame from foot to head.

Stephen said he knew a rose,
One and two, yea, roses three,
Lovelier far than any those
Which at service-time we see—
Emblems of atonement done,
And of Christ's Belovèd One,
And of Mary's mystic Son.

Stephen said his roses grew
All upon a milk-white stem;
Side by side together two,
One a little up from them.
Sweeter than the rose's breath,
Rosy as the sun riseth,
Warm beside—that was his death.

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Stephen swore, as God knows well,
Just to touch that topmost bud,
He would give his soul to hell—
Soul and body, bones and blood;
Hell has come before he dies,
Burning, burning, there he lies,
And he neither speaks nor cries.

Oh, what might those roses be?
Once, before the dawn was red,
Did he wander out to see
If the rose were still a-bed?
Did he find a rose tree tall
Standing by the silent wall?
Did he touch the rose of all?

"Stephen, was it worth the pain,
Just to touch a breathing rose?"
Ah, to think of it again,
See, he smiles amidst his woes!
Did he dream that hell would be
Years hereafter? Now, you see,
Hell is here—and where is she?

At my word, through all his face
Flames the infernal fire within;
Mary, Mary, grant me grace,
Still to keep my soul from sin!
Thanks to God, my rose is one
Not so sweet, but all my own,
Not so fair, but mine alone.

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V

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

HERR Doctor Heinrich Meyer, Professor in Ordinary of Christian Ethics at the University of Jena, woke from his after-dinner nap, drew his handkerchief from his face, stretched himself, and looked out of the window. It was New Year's Eve, and the snow upon the high-piled roofs gleamed in the midwinter sunset. Now and then some of the townspeople tramped across the market square, keeping carefully to the brown paths worn on the white surface, and as they raised their hats, the Professor knew they were wishing each other a blessing upon their dinners.

"Gesegnete Mahlzeit!" It was a blessing which peculiarly suited his mood. All morning he had been working peacefully at his great work upon *The Development of the Ideal of Womanhood among the Christians of the Primitive*

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Church, with special reference to the Virgin-Cultus in the Pre-Christianic Religions of Ephesus, Athens, and Rome. He had sketched out the treatise as a handbook in nine volumes, and was already far advanced in the first. Ten years was the time which he proposed to devote to the undertaking, and he had begun upon it the day after he finished his *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles,* a work which had been well reviewed by the *Universal Yearbook of Religion in General,* and had secured him his "call" from Marburg, where he had been only an "extraordinary" Professor of Faith-History, to his present regular Professorship. He confidently expected that his new enterprise, which was to appear volume by volume, would bring a higher "call"—to Leipzig, or perhaps to Berlin itself—before many years were out. "Woman," he often said to his wife with satisfaction, "woman is a folk-and-faculty-interesting stuff," and he sometimes felt the exhilaration of a popular author.

He had been especially glad to receive the call to Jena, because he had spent two semesters there as a student some ten or twelve years before. It was full of pleasant memories, the

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surroundings were "romantic," and the neat little paths laid down among the hills and pine forests enabled the stoutest citizen to wander from beerhouse to beerhouse without fatigue or fear of losing his way. The beer was excellent, the library large, and living very cheap. The Professor of Christian Ethics had every reason to feel a glow of comfortable contentment with himself and the world. Certainly it was freezing cold outside, but his windows were double, they were never opened during the winter, and the large white stove had heated the study to a delicious warmth. The savour of his afternoon cigar hung about the room. His wife had given him goose with stewed prunes for dinner. True, it was a week after the proper festivity of Christmas, but then she had got the bird cheaper on that account; and having led it home from market with a string round its neck, had killed it herself in the back garden, to the great delight of their two children. For she was a highly educated and very efficient woman, having studied German literature in a "Higher Daughters' School" at Halle, and household management in one of the best families of Rechtlingshausen-am-Oder.

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New Year's Eve, and all was well with him! The Professor drew a deep breath of stuffy air, like a man who has reached security and can take his ease. He was indeed secure. He liked lecturing, and students of theology were almost bound to attend his lectures. He liked writing, and for the next ten years he could write every day almost without a check. He liked his wife, and under her care he could hope for good health, satisfying dinners, cheerful chatter at meals, and no extravagance. The children went to school every day, and gave him no trouble. His clothes were good for another two or three years, and he had enough linen to carry him through the winter months till the great wash in the spring. As he reflected on all these causes for thankfulness in turn, he sighed again with satisfaction, and a further sensation of pleasure stole over him at the sound of four o'clock striking from the octagon tower of the old church across the market-place.

It was time to start for coffee. Till lately the servant-girl had always brought it to his room, but since his rise in fortune he had felt justified in launching out a little, and had gone for it to the Schnitzel restaurant. This afternoon, as it

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was a holiday, he had resolved to mount one step higher and go to the "Bear" itself, though the coffee was a penny more, and the waiter expected a halfpenny instead of a farthing. "After all," he thought, "something is required of a man of my position. 'Noblesse oblige.'"

Wrapping himself up carefully in overcoat, scarf, and gloves, and putting on his goloshes, he ventured out into the still, cold air. Along the street nearly all the passers-by greeted him, and he answered with the friendly good humour of a man who is conscious of success. "Good evening, Herr Professor!" "Prosit Neujahr, Herr Professor!" "I hope your dinner is agreeing with you, Herr Professor!" It was like the prelude of fame.

He stopped at the "Bear" with the dignified assurance of one who does the most fashionable thing possible, and was pleased that a good many townspeople were passing the door and would see him go in. He purposely spent a long time stamping the snow off his goloshes, and at last, with a glow of expectation, he opened the door and entered.

A few officers with glittering swords were seated at two of the tables, and at the others

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some of the Professor's colleagues were scattered about, all eyeing the officers and basking in the reflected glory of their presence, but no more daring to sit at the military tables than the townspeople would have dared to enter the café at all. As a recent arrival in the University, the Professor of Christian Ethics modestly took his seat at the table nearest the door, opposite a solitary man, who was staring fixedly at a huge glass of beer. Hardly had he sat down when he saw the Rector of the University rise from the very top of the room, bow profoundly towards him, wave his mug in the air, at the same time crying, "Prosit, Herr Professor Meyer!" and empty it at one long draught. The Professor rose and bowed. He was profoundly delighted. The Rector was a morphologist whose name was famous throughout Europe, and he received £300 a year for his office. For a Professor of Christian Ethics to be recognised by such a man in the best café of the University was to stand on the summit of glory. But it certainly put him in a difficulty. He had come for coffee, but to answer the Rector's greeting in coffee was an unimaginable offence, and not to answer it at all was social extinction. So he called for a liqueur

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brandy with the coffee. After all, one has to live up to one's position, and his wife had given him a thaler that morning to do what he liked with. Thanks to the Acts of the Apostles, he was above the reach of poverty now.

So when next he caught the Rector's eye, he sprang up with the words: "Herr Rector, I follow you at once!" and he emptied the golden little glass. He had made a successful beginning and looked round upon the room with the confident benevolence that springs from self-applause.

When he had finished his leisurely survey, he glanced across his own table, and was met by two keen eyes that were watching him with a whimsical air of dubious recognition. As he looked the stranger rose at once and held out his hand. "Good evening, Heinrich," he said, "I was almost sure it was you."

The figure was tall and gaunt; the face deeply lined with thought, care, and dissipation; the hair and beard already grey. Involuntarily the Professor took the long brown hand in his plump little fingers and gazed in astonishment.

"Hans Kammerer!" he murmured at length,

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almost under his breath. "Hans Kammerer! you here!"

"Certainly. Why not?" said the other, laughing.

The Professor did not answer in words, but he could not avoid one hasty glance at the worn and wrinkled clothes. There was nothing outrageous about them—nothing even remarkable for a German man of letters—and yet the Professor saw at once that the man was a failure and had obtained no recognised position in the world. There was something happy-go-lucky and devil-may-care about him, as though he were still a student, in spite of his shock of grey hair. Perhaps it was chiefly the large black necktie done in a bow like a Frenchman's. But whatever the cause, the Professor would have given worlds to have sat down at another table with his back to this.

"Delighted to see you!" he said, looking cautiously round. "Delighted to see you, I'm sure!"

Happily, no one seemed to be noticing them. Probably, after all, he was the only person present who would remember Hans Kammerer, the random poet and general ne'er-do-well, who

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had borne so queer a reputation as a student, and evidently had not improved. If only this had not been his own first appearance at the "Bear!" But there was no help for it now; evil communications do not corrupt a Professorship of Christian Ethics.

"Delighted to see you!" he said again.

Kammerer planted both elbows on the table, and looked at the Professor with smiling interest.

"So that is what Heinrich Meyer has grown into," he murmured. "You seem pretty prosperous, Herr Professor. You do not intrude your skeleton at the feast."

"There is no skeleton in my cupboard, thank God!" said the Professor.

"Oh no," said the other; "I only meant your own bones. You are covering them well against the buffets of the world."

"One has to settle down in order to do any really good work," said the Professor.

"You are quite right; I admire you for it. I read your Commentary on the Acts, and felt sure that destiny had marked you out for a theological professorship. When I came to Jena to-day, I quite hoped to be able to congratulate you in person, and now I do."

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"You are very kind," said the Professor, thinking that his old fellow-student might not look so very disreputable after all, especially from behind.

"So you teach morality to students," the other went on reflectively.

"Yes; my next course is to be a comparison of the Aristotelian and Pauline ideals of virtue."

"Excellent! And which do you think the higher ideal to follow? I mean which do you follow yourself?"

"Oh, my method is entirely historical," said the Professor with some condescension.

"To be sure," answered Kammerer apologetically. "And what is the really good work you spoke of?"

"Oh, that's my future book—my Handbook on the Ideal of Womanhood in the Primitive Church."

"Womanhood? Ah yes; that's a subject you know something about. You're quite a specialist!"

"Certainly!" retorted the Professor; "I'm a married man."

"Of course you are. But I've been a married man too, and yet I've never written a book on

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the Ideal of Womanhood. Marriage doesn't necessarily make one a specialist, or even increase one's knowledge much. I shouldn't have thought it would have increased yours at all."

He looked smilingly at the Professor, but there was no responding smile, and both were silent for a time. Then Kammerer took a long draught at his glass, and as he drew breath, he said suddenly, "I suppose you didn't marry Lisbeth by any chance?"

"My *dear* fellow!" gasped the Professor, glancing round involuntarily.

"Ah! I supposed you didn't."

"I really hardly remember the circumstance you refer to," said the Professor carelessly, as though to close the subject.

"'Hardly remember' is good," laughed Kammerer. "That is exactly the right mood for the loves of the past. One should hardly remember them—just a misty impressionist sketch of a red mouth, a row of teeth—like sheep, as Solomon said—a soft word, a soft touch, all entangled in a whirl of hair—golden hair, black hair, brown hair, flaming hair, as the case may be. Lisbeth's was gold, pure gold, so brilliant that

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the sun himself mistook it for sunshine. I, too, hardly remember Lisbeth, but it was gold, pure gold."

"I really do not see any purpose in recalling the episode," said the Professor, staring vacantly down the room and wondering whether the officers were listening.

"Oh, no purpose at all, beyond the pleasures of memory," said Kammerer. "How I used to laugh! You, so cautious and demure, suddenly risking your degree for a little bit of a creature with a pathetic face, innocent eyes, and hair all gold! Ah, do you think I didn't envy you those twin roses which fed among the lilies? You see, like Mephisto, I am rather fond of quoting Solomon. In his more charming moments he was a poet so much like myself. Yes, I envied you; I almost burst my liver with envy, as Horace puts it. Did I ever tell you that once, just once, before you came upon the scene, she kissed me? Yes; it seems incredible, but, as Goethe said, so does the rose, so does the nightingale. Of course, as soon as your solemn face appeared, it was no good. That's where you deserving fellows get such a pull over us poor devils. Kiss me—oh, how dark and

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strange and sinful she thought it! But you! Why she looked for no more harm from you than from the Acts of the Apostles! I wonder what has become of her now."

"My dear fellow, how should I possibly know?" said the Professor irritably. "She is probably the mother of a promising family by this time. By the way, did I tell you I have two children myself?"

"Only two?" said Kammerer. "Well, I suppose she has gone the way of most girls with a heart like hers. She isn't the first, as my dear Mephisto said. But it seems rather a pity. Her soul was one sweet Volkslied—all violets and moonlight, and the beat of a wild swan's wing. Not once in a hundred years is the living spirit of our foolish old German romance so incarnated. Such a pathetic little face!—not sorrowful, but as though prepared for sorrow, just as her heart was prepared for all the illusions of love. It would be interesting to watch the course of a soul like that as it approaches middle age. Of course it must die. Whether its body goes on living or not, the original soul must die. The interesting point would be to discover the exact moment when it could be called quite dead—

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dead past revival. Happily the murder of a soul is not a criminal offence. It is, indeed, very often difficult to distinguish between its murder and its education. Let us hope that Lisbeth's experience has been educational."

"I intend to publish my book volume by volume," said the Professor, after a pause. "Of course there are objections. The form of the completed work will perhaps not be so plastic in its presentment, and there are minor difficulties of arrangement and indexing. But I think it is better to retain the attention of the public over a considerable period of time than to become suddenly famous in middle life."

"Oh, does it matter?" said Kammerer, with a yawn. "Look here, Heinrich, my boy, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll walk out to the old Mill Tavern, along the Apolda Road, and sun our sleepy maturity in the memories of youth. To stand with you sentimentalising over Lisbeth's empty home would be worth a poem to me. Besides, there's no such white beer on the terraqueous globe. The high-pitched roof, the ancient linden—how idyllic it all was! Do you remember the bowling-alley, and how Lisbeth would cry, 'Bravo, Herr Heinrich!' when you

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knocked a ninepin over by accident? My word! we all said 'Bravo, Herr Heinrich!' before very long. What do you say, Herr Professor? I should think it wouldn't do you any harm to walk a mile."

The Professor's mind was torn by distracting fears and desires at the proposal. He was physically very comfortable. The air in the café had reached the temperature that he enjoyed. He was only a quarter way through his second cigar, and the liqueur was working with a warm and imaginative stimulation upon his brain. He was also very reluctant to leave the café so soon, because he could not afford to come very often, and to-night there was a good chance of being seen there by all the leading people of the University, and perhaps by a few students from the best fighting corps.

But what would they all think of his companion? Kammerer, with his wild eyes and rough hair, was a rather spectral object; he was like a ghost from the old-fashioned, dreamy times before Germany grew scientific and materialised. His voice, though low, was singularly penetrating, and he really seemed incapable of discussing any subject but one. Certainly

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it was rather pleasant to think of one's own past success and to be an object of envy to a man like the poet. But the revival of that ancient episode might be rather inconvenient to a Professor of Christian Ethics in so small a town. After all, therefore, it would be safer to sacrifice an hour's enjoyment to future security. It was often safer to do that, he had found. Besides, he rather liked the idea of going to brood over the scene of that brief and distant passion. The conversation and liqueur had revived strange feelings and memories of certain things that he never dared to think of now.

"All right," he said at last, "we'll go for a walk if you like. I find walking very healthy, and it will give us an appetite for supper."

That they might not seem to be going out in company, he stopped to exchange a few words with another professor, and then after a deep bow to the Rector he followed Kammerer into the frosty air.

Under the brilliant half-moon, the ancient town looked like a mediæval dream. The ground and roofs gleamed with bluish white, and like a bluish ghost the church tower rose high above the gables. Here and there a lattice window

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reflected the moon, even the snow crystals shone blue in her light, and in the intense cold they crunched together underfoot with a sound like the leather on a new saddle. The cafés and beershops round the market-place cast an orange glow from their windows, and in the midst of the square the students were putting the finishing touches to the great bonfire that was to be lighted soon. Already here and there rose the New Year song of "Gaudeamus."

"Youth—irredeemable youth—how freshly it still goes on," said Kammerer, as they turned out of the square down a lane so narrow and dark that they had almost to feel their way. "Nature is at her old, old game: illusion, birth, death — birth, illusion, death—those are the chimes she rings, and they always end upon the deep-toned bell."

"I really feel quite poetically inclined myself, to-night," said the Professor. "I seem like Goethe going back to Sesenheim after all those years."

"Exactly like, I should think," said Kammerer. "How touching it will be if we find Lisbeth sitting in the old familiar place, and she exclaims, 'The heart that has loved Heinrich

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Meyer could love no one else!' In a woman all things are possible."

Just then, as they were picking their way painfully along the narrow track worn upon the snow, they saw someone walking in front of them.

"A woman!" whispered Kammerer, "a young woman too! Forgive me, old man, but I never pass a young woman in the street at night without speaking to her. It seems so unflattering and ungrateful."

He hurried on, and as he drew close to the woman he said softly, "Good evening, mistress mine, may we see you safely to your threshold's door?"

"Certainly, if you like," she answered bluntly. "You won't have far to go."

"It's a cold night for girls to be walking about alone," he said. "Two are warmer than one."

"Freezing cold," she answered, "but I'm not a girl."

"A charming woman then, and of just the most attractive age," he said, going to her side with a sweeping bow. "Allow me, gracious lady, to have the honour of carrying your basket."

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"Bah! What swinery!" she said, and turned sharply up a flight of steps into a dark doorway.

"Beauteous but cruel lady," Kammerer continued in the same laughing tone, "you cannot leave us thus! You will permit us at least to accompany you to the inner gateway of your romantic chamber?"

"Certainly, if you like," said the woman again, laughing aloud from somewhere in the darkness.

"My dear fellow, do come on," said the Professor. "Just think if a man of my position were found in such a situation!"

"Unhappily for me, I have no position," Kammerer answered. "That woman fascinates me. She has what you professors call the genuine Germanity. How downright her answers are! I seem to see her yellow hair reaching down, goodness knows how far, and under that big cloak is a superbly moulded figure, like the Niederwald Germania in little! You go on, if you like. To me this sort of adventure is a psychical necessity."

The woman's footsteps could be heard tramping steadily up the wooden stairs, and Kammerer groped his way in the darkness after her. The

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Professor hesitated and looked stealthily round. Then he followed them.

"After all," he thought to himself, "a student of ethics should make himself acquainted with every form of life."

He made what haste he could in the dark for fear of people coming out from the other floors and finding him there. But as he began the fifth staircase, the footsteps of the two in front of him stopped. It was evidently the attic story and they could go no higher. He heard a hard and scornful little laugh, and a woman's voice said, "Oh, heavens, what a joke! Two fine gentlemen in pursuit of *me!*"

The bitter laugh came again, and then, as the Professor arrived panting on the landing, the voice said mockingly, "Hope you're fond of climbing, sir! I've got my key. If one of you gentlemen would kindly strike a match, I won't waste time fumbling about. Gentlemen are always so impatient."

There was a long sputter of little blue flames that showed three figures standing like ghosts amid a horrible smell of sulphur. Then, as the light turned orange, Kammerer held it up for a moment, and instantly dropped it.

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"That was clumsy of you, sir," said the woman, trying to find the keyhole.

"Lisbeth!" said Kammerer. All three were silent. With his hands behind him the Professor began to feel his way backwards along the wall to the top of the stairs.

"Well, yes," said the woman at last, "that is my name. How did you know me?"

"I used to be Hans Kammerer."

"Herr Hans, the poet!" she cried, laughing again. "And who is the stout gentleman with you?"

Kammerer struck another match. The soft blue flames and then the orange light showed the Professor eyeing her sideways, with his back against the wall, and one foot down the stairs. They looked at each other while the match burnt on.

"Don't run away, Herr Professor," she said quietly as it went out. "I heard of your appointment some time ago, and supposed I should meet you sooner or later, but I never dreamt it was two such old friends following me up here. What a glorious joke!"

"God Himself could hardly improve it," said Kammerer.

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"Why, Herr Hans!" she cried, laughing again, "you don't even know what it is yet. One more match, please. Here we stand chattering and wasting time when my poor husband ought to be having his medicine."

"Your husband!" said Kammerer.

"Certainly," she answered, stooping to find the keyhole; "that's the joke!"

"You see," she went on as she turned the lock, "he's too ill to move, so I have to lock the door when I go out, for fear of the children falling downstairs."

She pushed the door gently open. "Come in, Herr Hans," she said in a low voice. "Please come in, Herr Professor. It's so good of you both to visit my poor husband when he's so ill."

So they entered. The sloping roof and bitter air showed there was nothing but thin slates and plaster between the tiny room and the stars. In one corner a little iron stove smouldered without giving warmth. On a little bare table a burning wick supported by corks upon a surface of oil in a tumbler threw a dim light around. Scraps and bandages of linen, stiff with frost, hung on strings stretched across the room and gave out the sour smell of babies. Nearly the whole surface of the

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floor was taken up by two beds and a common deal cupboard such as German workwomen use for clothes. Stretched on his back upon the larger bed lay a middle-aged man, evidently in the extremity of illness. His half-closed eyes showed only the white. His deeply lined and rugged face was wasted away, and the deadly pallor underlying the sunburnt skin had turned it green. The hairy and knotted hands, too begrimed ever to be clean again, clutched the grey blanket to his throat, and each difficult breath sounded through the room like a groan.

Nestling against the warmth of his body on one side lay a golden-haired child of about four years old, fast asleep. On the other side, a baby of four or five months was amusing itself by staring at the light and blowing a series of frothy little bubbles from its mouth.

"Please come right in and shut the door, Herr Professor," said the woman. "We must keep the cold out."

The Professor came forward awkwardly, and in ducking his head under the baby-linen that hung across the room, he stumbled against something beside the other bed, and there was a sharp little cry.

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"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," he said, looking down in the dim light.

"Stand up at once, Heinrich, and make a bow to the gentleman," said the mother. "Now stop crying, or I'll smack you."

A rough-headed, ungainly boy of eleven rose from the edge of the bed, sobbing quietly and rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand. He had evidently been undressing, for he stood only in a patched and torn shirt, and the Professor had trodden on his naked feet with a wet and gritty boot.

"Now stop that noise," said the mother, "and get into bed with Lisbeth, or you'll wake your father up."

Sniffing unhappily the boy slid under the bedclothes, shirt and all, and lay down with chattering teeth beside a sleeping girl some two or three years younger.

After one look, the Professor kept his eyes resolutely turned away from him.

"There! I knew how it would be," said the woman again; "you've waked your father up, you naughty boy."

And indeed the half-unconscious figure under the grey blanket was beginning to groan more

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loudly, and his limbs could be seen feebly moving.

"He seems very ill," said Kammerer in a whisper.

"Yes," said the woman, with ever so little a tremble in her voice; "the doctor says he'll probably die to-morrow or next day, poor boy. But if we could scrape him through to the end of the week, he might recover and be at work again when the frost goes."

"What was his trade?" asked Kammerer.

"Oh, he works on the railway—fifteen shillings a week. In two years he hopes to be making twenty. He's a good enough workman—hardly ever drinks. But he has got a weak chest, and now it has turned to consumption."

The two men stood silent, watching the gasping face, almost as shrunken and inexpressive as if it were dead already.

"Yes," the woman went on, "the doctor says he'll probably die to-morrow or next day. Oh, one needn't mind saying it; he can't understand a single word. But we're going to pull you through, aren't we, old cock?"

She bent over the bed and scrutinised her

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husband with the practical interest of a hospital nurse. For the first time the Professor could look at her closely. Her forehead and cheeks were marked with wrinkles of care and hard work. The once tender, yielding little mouth was now a firmly closed straight line. The pathetic blue eyes were greenish grey and indifferent as stone. The little hands that had caressed him were broad and hard and chapped. The tender form that had been so close, so close against his heart, was meagre and shapeless now. The coarse brown skirt and bodice, much worn at the breast and gaping down the line of hooks, hung awkwardly upon it, and underneath the dress there evidently was not much to keep her warm. But for Kammerer, should he have known her at all? He was not sure. He would certainly have passed her without notice in the street; perhaps he had passed her often. Only her eyebrows—a peculiar, plaintive little frown they had—only that remained the same.

He was filled with angry disgust at his former folly, and his disgust extended to the commonplace woman who had been its cause. So this was the favour to which the sentimental passion

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came!—the worn-out body, the dreary toil, the deadened brain, the flopping baby-linen hung to dry.

"Would you just catch hold of his head and lift him up a bit, Herr Hans?" said Lisbeth. "I'll try to get some of the medicine down him."

Forcing the fingers of one hand between the sick man's teeth, she thrust the spoon into his mouth with the other, and then held his jaws tightly closed till he was obliged to swallow, just as one gives a pill to a dog.

"That's all right," she said, as she saw the lump in the sinewy neck rise and fall. "Now we'll give him some warm milk and cognac, and rub his chest with spirit of mustard. Perhaps you wouldn't mind beginning on his chest while I get the milk ready. Here's the bottle. Heaven and earth, it's nearly empty! I shall want some more first thing to-morrow, and it's so dear! Now be careful how you turn the clothes down, so as not to disturb the baby."

Kammerer tried to bare the man's chest as delicately as though he were performing a surgical operation, but all his care was useless. Feeling the cold air and seeing a strange face, the

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baby turned from pink to purple and set up a lamentable cry.

"Devil take the child!" muttered the woman. "Here, let me come to him. He wants seeing to, and perhaps he's hungry as well. It's near his time. I'll just take him into the kitchen if you'll go on with the rubbing."

She whipped up the yelling baby under one arm, and choosing some fairly dry linen from the string, went off into a dark little room beyond.

The two men said nothing to each other after she had gone. The Professor was standing helpless and motionless between the two beds; his eyes still carefully turned away from the bed where the boy was lying. Like the spectator of some distant and unintelligible scene, he watched Kammerer warm his hands at the smouldering stove, pour a little spirit on them, and begin to rub the sick man's hairy chest. In the kitchen the baby had suddenly become still, but for a few little grunts of contentment. Everyone seemed to have forgotten the Professor's existence, and as the minutes went slowly by he only longed to get away from so unpleasant an experience.

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"I think I'll be going now," he said at last.

"What! leave me alone with Lisbeth!" Kammerer answered with ironic horror. "It's true," he continued, laughing and looking round the room—"it's true we shouldn't be exactly alone, seeing that there'd be seven of us all told."

Just then the woman came back again with the baby into the obscure light, her dress still unhooked down the front.

"I'm wondering where you sleep yourself, Madam Lisbeth," said Kammerer, looking up from his rubbing.

"Oh, don't ask me," she answered. "On the chair, on the floor, in the kitchen, wherever I can. But I've not much time for such things as sleeping. All I've got to think about is how to feed the children and keep my man alive. What's to become of us if he dies now? They won't let Heinrich leave school yet, and, besides, he's too small to bring in much wages. He's going to one of the factories at Apolda the moment he's old enough."

The boy, excited by the presence of two grown-up strangers, was lying awake listening and staring from one to the other with dreamy

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grey eyes. He knew the factory was his destiny, and it did not seem strange.

"There, that's all I'm up to now," said Kammerer, carefully closing the sick man's shirt and drawing up the blanket over him and the little ones. "Besides, the spirit has run out."

"Oh, don't say that!" cried the woman despairingly. "The doctor told me it was so important. Do you think the old boy will do till morning? He does seem easier, doesn't he? And then I'll spring over and get some more. But it's dear—everything's dear!"

The Professor drew the two shillings change out of his thaler quietly from his pocket and laid it on the table unobserved.

The sick man's sighs certainly came more gently now. He seemed to be passing from vague unconsciousness into ordinary sleep. The baby and the two little girls were asleep as well, and the whole room was full of quiet breathings. The eldest boy alone kept awake, with eyes that followed every movement of the strangers.

"We had better say good night now," whispered Kammerer, after they had stood for a while in silence watching the blind struggle of a living thing against death.

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"Good night, Herr Hans," whispered the woman. "Who would have thought of seeing you again? I'm sorry I gave you such a disappointment. There, don't protest, please! I know all about it. I know what men are."

She gave him her hand with ever so little a smile. Then turning to the other, she said, "Good night, Herr Professor."

"Good night," said the Professor, bowing awkwardly in the doorway.

They went out, she holding the light to show them the dim outline of the stairs.

"Mother," said the boy when she returned, "was that fat gentleman some kind of an angel? He has left two shillings on the table."

She looked for a moment at the boy's dreamy grey eyes and sensitive face; then seizing the money, she sprang to the window and threw it open. Outside the night was black under the freezing stars. In the very act of flinging the money into the invisible street she paused and looked at it hungrily again. She turned her eyes to the dim and miserable room. Slowly she shut the window to, took a worn old purse from her pocket, and put the two shillings carefully there.

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On reaching the pure air outside the Professor looked up at the open sky with pleasurable relief. His heart was aglow with generosity and good feeling, and he felt the tender joy of a soft and conciliatory mood. He was ready even to forgive Kammerer for having caused him that horrible moment on the stairs, and forced him into that squalid scene. Turning to his friend with a genial smile, he said—

"You see your fears were entirely groundless. The girl is respectably married, and the memory of the past doesn't give her a moment's anxiety. I confess I am relieved, though of course no one would be so foolish as to allow a youthful freak to weigh upon his mind for any length of time. Still, one would not willingly have brought harm upon anyone, and I owe you a debt—a considerable debt—for the discovery that all is well. The husband, I feel certain, will soon get better and go to work again. My wife shall send them over some soup. But stop a moment—perhaps the soup would come better from a restaurant; I mean it would be fresher and warmer, though not so cheap, of course."

"It isn't often things work out so satisfactorily," said Kammerer. "I congratulate you

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with all my heart. After all, you were the girl's true benefactor—gave her just that one splash of crimson romance in an existence of dirty greys."

"Oh, I won't claim any particular credit for anything I did," answered the Professor, hesitating at the end of the alley. "But it's no good going on to the mill now, is it? Let's have another glass somewhere, and then to work!"

"No, thanks," said Hans; "I'm going to join the students at the bonfire and dance a melancholy joy into my old bones."

They parted, and from his study window, with his wife and children at his side, the Professor watched the flames kindle and shoot into the air, while round the blaze, which threw a happy red upon all faces, the students leapt with linked arms and hands tightly clasped, singing their immemorial New Year song—

"Gaudeamus igitur,
Juvenes dum sumus."

A profound and gentle peace pervaded the Professor's heart, and he placed one arm lightly round his wife's substantial figure, while with the

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other hand he stroked his children's close-cropped heads. At last he sent them away to get supper ready, and as he settled down to continue his chapter upon "The Ideal of Womanhood, as expressed in the many-breasted but apparently virgin Artemis of Ephesus, and her possible connection with the Shiva of the Brahministic Aryans," he murmured happily to himself, "I do not deny the charm of youthful pleasures, but after all, there is nothing keeps life so sweet and wholesome as toiling in some high cause for the sake of humanity at large."

About the same time as he made this reflection, while the smell of supper began to creep under his door, the woman who had once formed an episode in his life was staring vacantly at her sick husband, while torturing pictures of the past melted into each other behind her eyes. Suddenly she heard a soft footstep on the stairs, there was a gentle tap at the door, and Hans Kammerer stood there again.

"I've only brought you that spirit you wanted," he said, laughing. "I sometimes think it's just worth while to keep a youngish man alive. And now I'll go, unless you've got anything for me to do."

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But he did not go. Hour after hour he remained watching alone between the wretched beds, and if the children woke he soothed them to sleep again with comfortable words. When all was still he crept noiselessly into the half darkness of the kitchen, and crouching beside the hassock which was Lisbeth's pillow, he drew the rough bit of carpet tenderly over her, and smoothed her wild mass of faded and colourless hair.

"Gold, pure gold it was," he said to himself.

Once her hand touched his, and she murmured, "So tired, mother, so tired—so happy—sleep and sleep."

"How ridiculous that you should have children, poor child," he said, "and no one to comfort you yourself."

Once she woke, and laying her face between his knees as he sat beside her, she cried with low and passionate sobs as though she could never stop.

"I wonder," he thought, as in silence he soothed her with his hand, "I wonder at what exact moment a soul may fairly be called dead. This woman here—she is just the same as

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when I loved her. That is the saddest joke of all."

Gradually she slept again, and for fear of waking her he never moved her resting-place till the deep church bells began to sound in the cold darkness of the New Year's morning.

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THE PALIMPSEST

A DIRTY, mouldering parchment page,
Thumbed brown by many a generation
Of starveling monks, and thin with age
As a decaying skeleton leaf,
With no trace left of the exultation
That made the springtide laugh. We look
At the close, black lines with pitying grief
For those who wrote the book.

No doubt the Latin tells a story
No mortal man now cares to read,
How some wan saint found death and glory
By spitting at a pagan god,
Or with the desert beasts did feed,
Unshorn, unwashed, from year to year,
Or rolled upon the frozen sod
To thwart a demon's leer.

Or haply 'tis some learned work
Of old Aquinas—"great dumb ox"—
To whom his brothers, as a quirk,
Sent a light lady fair to view,
With scanty clothing save her locks,
To intercept his speculation;
But he with torch consigned her to
Her proper destination,

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And turned him round again to think
If essences have real existence,
And wrote the problem out in ink
On any parchment that was nearest,
Just smiling in his mid persistence
To see the devil doubly routed,
In part by argument the clearest
That ever devil doubted,

And partly that his stroke destroyed,
As swift and sure as Michael's sword,
A subtle wile the fiend employed
To lure the gentle, wayward soul
From contemplation of the Word,
Whom if it know not, nought remains
To quench the fire and save it whole
From hell and endless pains.

For lo! beneath the crabbed text
Another line goes palely glancing,
A line of lovely Greek; perplexed
We follow it, as through the trees
A shepherd watches maidens dancing
In mazy revel, when the night
Is darkening, and he only sees
Their limbs and vestures white.

Is it that ancient tale of Troy?
Or does Ulysses swim to land?
Or frenzied Ajax shout for joy
'Mid slaughtered sheep? Or does the wife

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Lay wait with murder while the strand
Welcomes her lord in triumph high?
Or does Medea hide the knife,
And bid her babes good-bye?

Nay, 'tis the pageant of a god!
Hark, as they sweep through Thessaly,
Waving the fragrant fennel rod,
With bosoms bare and garlands torn,
"Hail, Dionysus!" still they cry,
"Saviour from care and gloom and sin,
For thee an ivy crown is worn,
For thee a dappled skin.

"And at thy side a torch is seen
When woods are purple with the night,
Guiding the feet of love's own queen,
As rosy as the rosy fire,
To secret homes of dear delight;
At her approach the beasts around
Are tame, and moan with heart's desire,
And fawn upon the ground."

The revel passes, and in place,
Set in the halo of the sun,
Behold Apollo, calm of face!
His sounding bow is in his hand,
He guides the horses as they run,
In progress with the chastening light
From Delos through the Athenian land
To stern Parnassus' height.

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"Pæan Apollo, hear our prayer!
Lyæus, spare thy suppliants!
Hear, Aphrodite"—Ah, but there
Down comes the schoolman's pen, like tones
Of wrathful thunderclaps, and plants
Anew the doctrine of the state
That Mary holds on heavenly thrones,
Virgin immaculate.

A dirty, mouldering, parchment page,
Thumbed brown by many a generation
Of starveling monks, and thin with age,
Like some poor soul that scarce can breathe
Under the weary perturbation
Of anxious cares, heaped high above
His ancient self, which underneath
Runs in pale lines of love.

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VI

IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

FULL of joy, young Kephalas climbed the rocky mountain-side, with his section of green-coated cavalry straggling behind him. The cavalry had no horses; there were not enough horses to go round. No matter! other nations had mounted infantry, Greece had unmounted cavalry; and the April sun shone gaily, and a breeze blew from the sea; brilliant flowers smiled, bees went booming past, and from the valley below came the tinkling of goat-bells, for the herds were being gathered into pens.

Now and again from the top of the hill came the sharp report of a rifle, and Kephalas listened with pleasure. It showed he was at last in the very front—the place where all his loving friends in Athens had told him he was always sure to be. At times he stopped a moment and looked round upon his handful of men. "To the City!" he

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cried, springing lightly from rock to rock, and waving them forward with outstretched arm.

The men drew breath and wiped their faces on their sleeves. Some laughed, some grunted. One said with pleasant Greek familiarity, "It's all very well, but you've not got to carry a rifle, my little one!"

"To the City! To Constantinople!"—that cry had echoed in the boy's mind long before the fighting began. He had often pictured himself riding in at those historic gates, whilst the Tyrant fled through the wilds of Asia, and all Europe rang with applause. And now the war had lasted ten days, and victory was as good as certain. Here he was, with an invading force, over twenty miles in Turkish ground—twenty miles upon the road!

"Take your fellows straight up, and fill in the gaps along the crest. Be careful: you'll find it pretty warm up there," said a staff officer who was sitting under some bushes with two or three others, leisurely smoking.

"Up we go! This way to the enemy!" cried Kephalas, cheering on his men again.

"Brave as a lion!" said one of the officers, blowing the cigarette smoke through his nose.

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"Oh, we're all that!" said another, and Kephalas sprang up the hill, the men panting after him, while he fretted impatiently at their slowness.

Suddenly a shrill wail sounded through the air, high over head, and passed into silence far behind them down the valley. It was like the note that the wind makes upon a telegraph wire. Everyone looked up as though expecting to see a spirit, but all knew instantly what it was, and Kephalas glowed with pride at the thought that he had now been under fire and could tell his dear people at home how he felt. Turning towards his men, he took off his hat with mock politeness, as though bidding the bullet adieu, and then called upon them once more to make haste.

Next moment something passed quite close to him, with a low growl like a dog. He drew in his breath, and all his body seemed to shrink together. Down went his head, and he would have fallen flat but for a big rock in front of him, which he clung to as he stooped. The thing must have been close—horribly close. A few inches to the right, and life would have been nothing to him any more for ever.

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When at last he ventured to raise his head and look cautiously round, he saw some of the men were resting on their rifles, and some were cowering behind rocks like himself. But all were laughing, and they were laughing at him.

* * * * *

Morning slowly changed to noon. He was lying flat on the top of the mountain ridge, with a white-skirted Evzone on one side and his own corporal on the other. In front the men had piled a little wall of stones, with loopholes for the rifles. Now and again one of them took a prolonged aim at something and fired. Kephalas could only lie still and keep a watch upon the men. That was all that could be required of him. To right and left the scattered line stretched along the crest, all sheltered, like himself, behind rocks or piled-up stones. They were a mixed force, certainly—here a group of ordinary soldiers in heavy blue overcoats, there an Evzone or two, with conspicuous red cap and long white stockings, and at rare intervals one of his own green cavalry. There they had lain for many hours now and nothing had been done. They kept on firing, he could not see at what.

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He only wished they would stop, for whenever their firing increased the air began to wail again with the enemy's answer, and sometimes that terrible growling came, and sometimes a shrill cry like an angry child. At that sound he put his head between his arms. It seemed to come crosswise, from right to left, instead of from the front, but he could see no reason why it should. The men on each side imitated the noise when it was particularly horrible, and then looked at him and laughed again.

The sun beat down upon him and the thirst was unendurable. Turning his head, he could see the little village far below at the mountain's foot. A crowd of soldiers was gathered round the wells, watering the mules and sharing out the rations. There was actually water down there, and here he was dying of thirst. He could see the rough track running up through the village towards the pass which they were now defending. Some women and children were collecting their little herds of goats and cattle along the sides of it. Far away was the quiet blue sea, broken with mountain islands and thin promontories. He had never seen the world look so still and beautiful, but over his head the

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cry of the bullets passed. With each hour it had become more frequent, and now it hardly stopped.

The tall Evzone at his side rose and passed along the line, stepping unconcernedly among the rocks. He had gone to fetch ammunition, and Kephalas, with his face pressed against the ground, watched him moving from one man to another as he returned, and handing out cartridges as though they were presents. Every moment he expected to see him fall. The lead skimming over the edge of the crest would surely strike him. He watched with excited interest, as if he were at an execution, or like a gambler who has put a stake on a good chance. He could not take his eyes off the man; he almost hoped to see something terrible happen, and yet he longed for him to finish the task and lie down.

The man walked quietly from one end of the line to the other, and, after filling his own belt, went back with the empty bag to the little ammunition cart that had been drawn up the hill. Then he took up his rifle again, carefully rearranged the goat's-hair cloak he had been lying on, and went on firing at intervals as before.

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Kephalas would have given all but his life to be so calm, and yet he dared not move. Every time he had just determined to get up another bullet wailed or growled over him, and he lay still. But he was growing more and more restless with the inaction. It was impossible to remain there doing nothing any longer. He thought of his hopes of winning distinction in the war; he thought of his parents and sisters and one or two friends of theirs—married ladies and young girls, so enthusiastic for the cause of Greece—how they had all admired him. With what praise and devotion they had crowded round him when he went in his uniform to say good-bye!

One of the men at his side began talking to the other.

"See that devil looking round the end of that little shed? Quick! You sight on his white cap, and I'll sight on his body. Are you ready? Now!"

Both fired at the same second, and waited for the smoke to clear away.

"Got him!" said one.

"Good!" said the other.

"My shot," said the first.

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"Both, then," said the Evzone.

Kephalas could keep still no longer. Seized by an irresistible curiosity, he rose on his hands and knees, and crept close up to the little wall of stones till his head had almost touched it. He raised himself cautiously so that his eyes came level with the top. Two inches more and he saw the land in front. Just below him was a little red plain, dotted over with olive trees, small vine-yards, and some sheds and houses. It was only a few hundred yards across, and beyond it were mountains and more mountains again. Not a living soul was to be seen, but his eyes were at once fixed on a brown figure lying with out-stretched arms, half concealed by the corner of a barn. He knew at once it was the man the two soldiers had just killed. Beside the figure he could see the white Albanian fez which had rolled off as the man fell.

Five puffs of smoke issued together from the barn, and Kephalas looked at them curiously. Next instant the air all round him shrieked and whistled. With that terrible growling noise a bullet crashed against one of the rocks close by, and as it broke in pieces the fragments of lead and stone sputtered against his shoulder. He

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dropped behind the cover and lay there trembling.

"What the devil are you standing up for?" said the corporal. "You're drawing the fire!"

The shots came again from in front, and again the air screamed with death.

The Evzone's head fell forward upon the breech of his rifle, his legs quivered, and he drew them sharply up under him.

A bullet had sped through the loophole and sunk into his brain.

* * * * *

The afternoon moved slowly on. They carried the dead man away, and Kephalas took his rifle. It was nearly five o'clock now, and in two hours more the sun would go down and the terrible day end. Already the mountain's crest was throwing a shadow over the red land below it. For the last hour the enemy had been quieter, no doubt because they recognised the absurdity of attacking such a position as that. Only occasionally the double hammer of the Turkish Martini was heard, and a shot buzzed through the air. Looking along the scattered line, Kephalas saw that a great many of the fellows

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were fast asleep, and here and there little groups had spread out the olives and bits of bread they had brought in their pockets, and were quietly conversing. With a sense of happy relief he sank down comfortably beside the rifle. Dreamy visions of happy days passed before his eyes, and he heard well-known voices of people whom he loved gently but distinctly calling his name.

He was awakened by a hideous roar and a crash. Before he could realise what it was, another and another came.

"Sons of infidels!" cried the corporal, "they are shelling us!"

Kephalas peered through his loophole and saw a little cloud of smoke shoot out from the further edge of the plateau. In a few seconds came a scream through the air, ending in a sharp note like the sound a harp-string makes when it snaps. All the ground behind him was splashed with a rain of bullets and bits of iron, while in the sky above a thin wisp of white cloud showed where the shrapnel had burst. At the same time the rifle-fire was renewed along the whole front and increased to a ceaseless roll. Over the rocks and little shelters the bullets screamed as though

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driven by an irresistible wind, and now and again the shells flashed like lightning in a storm.

"They are coming!" said the corporal, and began firing, reloading, and firing again as fast as his fingers could move.

Kephalas peered between the stones again. Little groups and lines of brown figures in white caps were running forward over the red strips of field, hiding in olive bushes, getting behind sheds, creeping into ditches, but always coming on again—always on towards the foot of the ridge. They did not stop to fire, but behind them lay the long line of smoke and flashing spurts of flame from which that driving storm beat upon the crest.

Now was the last poor chance. Thrusting his rifle far through the loophole, he fired as wildly as the corporal. He fired at anything he saw. When one line passed he aimed at the next. From the incessant patter of the rifles he knew that everyone was doing the same. It seemed impossible that men could live under such a sleet of lead as fell upon those fields, and yet he knew at once that all was in vain. The lines came running on, ten or twenty at a time, as if no

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power on earth could check them. One after another they disappeared into the dead ground at the foot of the ridge, leaving but a few brown forms, quiet, or moving restlessly upon the furrows.

A silence of unendurable expectation fell upon the mountain crest. The shells ceased to fall, the rifle fire also ceased. Some of the men began standing up and moving about uneasily. Here and there one looked cautiously over the edge and fired, but was met by an outburst of firing from below. The order to fix bayonets was passed down, and a few obeyed. Some began to put on their coats and gather up their cartridges and other possessions. He saw the ambulance men and stretcher-bearers make off down the hill. He himself stood up and looked anxiously around. Behind him the sun was hanging low above a copper belt of sea. Day was nearly over, and in an hour's time it would be dark. In front he saw fresh lines of those white-capped figures beginning to steal silently across the fields. Few on the crest fired at them now. The rest kept moving backwards and forwards, and sometimes one crept a little way down the hill, then made

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a rush, and was hidden among the rocks of the slope.

As he watched the line seemed to shake. It began at the further end. The men ran back a yard or two, then forward again; they ceased to be a line, and became a confused blur of moving figures. Next moment they were streaming away down the steep. The impulse spread like fire from man to man. "Off you go!" shouted an officer, and there was no need to repeat the order. Flinging away their arms, leaping over the rocks, jostling and stamping upon each other at the top of each little track, they sprang down the mountain-side. They had but one thought, the longing to escape with life—to escape over that edge of rocks and bushes, beyond which nothing could be seen but a wood of olive trees far below.

Kephalas gave one more glance at the place where first the line had broken. Already a few of those dark brown forms were creeping over the rocks and firing at the fugitives as they disappeared. Then he followed the rest, and hurriedly slid down the face of a low cliff of broken stone. All was over. It would be absurd to stay. All was over. But now at least he

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could get water—water in any puddle—anything liquid—anything that he could pour down his burning throat.

* * * * *

The sun had gone down, but the clouds were still touched with crimson. The one little road up which the Greek army had pushed its way to the head of the pass was now crowded with a disordered stream of soldiers, with whom mules were mixed up, and carts and guns, while into the disordered stream the Christian peasants were urging their cattle and flocks. From the houses in the scattered village the people were throwing out their goods, and binding them on the backs of women and horses. In a confused and noisy rabble every living thing was struggling on to the road as the one hope of safety. No one stopped, no one listened, no one gave any orders. In half an hour the whole army was in wild retreat, and Kephalas was swept along unresistingly with the rest.

He had found his horse, and in silence he rode among the cursing soldiers, the screaming women and children, and the cattle. At every yard the panic and confusion increased. The cry arose

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that the Turks were coming. Flinging each other aside, and pushing their way among the horns of the cattle, the soldiers and peasants crushed along the road, and looking behind him, Kephalas saw that the height where he had been was now covered with little black figures, brandishing their arms and blowing shrill trumpets that could be heard even above the turmoil around him.

"There they are! They are coming! They are coming!" cried a man, rushing from the door of one of the cottages, and trying to drag a woman after him.

"No matter!" she said, in a quiet and contented voice. "Hold the quilt a minute while I see to the calf."

The answer was such a contrast to the general terror, that Kephalas looked at her again. She was a young peasant-woman of the usual Epirote type—strong, broad-featured, and coarsened by toil. But upon her face was a look of imperturbable happiness, such as nuns sometimes have. As she spoke she handed to her husband a long roll of quilt that Greek peasants use for bedding.

"Hold it just a minute," she said again, "while I put this animal straight. Be careful with it!"

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Her husband was a big, handsome man, with a mass of long black hair hanging over his forehead. He took the quilt in his arms, but all the time his eyes were turned to those dark figures upon the mountain.

"They are coming down!" he cried again. "There! I told you so. They are beginning to fire at us!"

"No matter!" she answered, in the same tranquil tone. "I'm almost ready now."

"You've forgotten the key," said the man impatiently, turning round again just as he was starting to run.

"Oh, that doesn't matter," she said. "We shall never want that again. But do wait half a minute till I've tied the calf's feet, and then you can take it and give me the quilt."

But the report of distant rifles sounded from the slope of the mountain, and shouting, "Come along! Come along!" the man pushed his way into the moving stream and was lost to sight.

For a moment a look of terror came into the woman's eyes as she saw him go. Then she stooped down, finished tying the feet of a little brown calf carefully together, put it round her neck in a loop, with the head hanging down her

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back, bound a wooden cradle tight round her shoulders so as to rest on the top of the calf, caught up a large iron cooking-pot in one hand, and set off in pursuit down the maddened chaos of the road.

"I'll take the cradle," said Kephalas, as she strove to push past his horse.

"Not for the whole world," she answered, and they were thrust apart by the tormented cattle, trampling wildly through the crowd, with wet muzzles high in air, and eyes turned downwards in terror.

* * * * *

It was quite dark but for the stars. Yard by yard the line of fugitives was making its way along a defile in the mountains. They had just passed through a village from which every soul had fled and joined in the retreat. Someone gave the word that the soldiers were to halt and line the trenches, carefully constructed some days before to defend the position. Kephalas heard the order as it was passed down from mouth to mouth. The soldiers who repeated it evidently thought it applied to everyone except themselves, but he turned off the road and dismounted. It

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was impossible to see where the trenches were, or to collect any of his men in the darkness and confusion. He tied the horse to a bush and lay down on some flat grass to wait. The sound of the passing feet, the shouts of the peasants to their cattle, and the crying of children were blended in a murmur like a river's, and he was dropping into the sleep of long exhaustion when someone kicked against his side and fell violently over him. It was a woman, for he felt her skirt brush across his face, and then came the quiet voice he had heard before: "Oh, what a mercy the cradle's empty!"

"Hurt?" he said, sitting up.

"Not much," she answered, shaking out her dress, and tightening the bands on her shoulders. "I was trying a short cut. Have you seen a man with a red quilt?"

"Not since we started."

"He must be somewhere," she said, half to herself, "and he's pretty careful as men go. If you do see him, tell him I'll be waiting at the far end of Arta bridge."

She pulled the calf round into a more comfortable position, and it moaned feebly with exhaustion and pain.

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"Stop that noise, you little bastard," she said endearingly; and taking up the cooking-pot, she went on into the darkness. Kephalas heard the jingling chains of gun-carriages going by. There was no thought of defence, and mounting again, he joined the rout.

* * * * *

The weary and terrified crowd stumbled along its way. Caught by the infection of panic, the soldiers paid no heed to commands. It was useless for one to stop when all the rest were going, and so in the stream of peasants and frightened cattle the army drifted back from point to point. Some time after midnight they cleared the mountains, and on one side of the road extended an open marsh where deep waters ran, and black pools reflected the stars. The confusion of the retreat was now dimly visible by the dull glow from a burning town, over which heavy clouds of illuminated smoke were hanging. Kephalas recalled the morning, not more than a week before, when he had ridden into that town with the joy of victory, and had found the Greek inhabitants setting fire to the homes of their oppressors. The fire was burning still, but how great was the

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change! Was it possible that those few hours on an insignificant ridge should have made all that difference?

For the first time the bitterness of shame came over him. Why had he been so frightened all day long? How much better it would have been to have died with honour! It was not such a difficult thing to die; he had seen that it was quick and simple. What was the good of life now that it was blackened with shame? That was a thought he dared not face, though it kept peering at him with sidelong eyes. If he had but charged upon those white-capped creatures as they climbed, with what pride his name would have been spoken!

But where would he have been now? What would he have heard of his fame? His body would be lying cold among the rocks. He would have felt nothing more again, and seen nothing more—no more sun, no more delight in food and drink and women. The cold, wet earth and everlasting forgetfulness — no, not even that! Nothing at all—an unimaginable nothingness.

"Hullo, Kephalas! Are you all right?" said a voice at his side, and he dimly saw the face of

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a brother officer, whose horse was being swept along in the crowd beside his own.

"If those Turks come on now, they'll kill every soul of us," the man went on.

"I suppose they will," said Kephalas.

"But we'll soon be safe now—that's one comfort," said the other.

"Yes; that's one comfort."

"I saw you going up to the firing-line—brave as a lion, as I said. Glorious engagement! I went up myself afterwards; never enjoyed anything more. We fought like heroes. Glorious engagement!—glorious! Should like to see what the papers say in Athens."

"Perhaps we shall be there in time," said Kephalas.

"Outnumbered, of course; we are a small people," the other continued. "But we fought like lions—there's no question of that. We shall be famous for ever."

"It seems to me rather a serious defeat," said Kephalas.

"So was Thermopylæ," said the other.

A thick cloud of dust hung above the road, the glare of the distant flames converting it into a red film that covered the sky. Strange figures

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moved in the dim light and vanished. Cries of terror and pain arose, and were unanswered. In helpless misery the beasts and human things jostled each other savagely along the surface of the world.

A woman's arm clung for a moment to the other officer's saddle for support.

"Curse you!" he cried. "Let go, will you? Let go!" and he struck at her with his bridle.

* * * * *

The white glimmer of next day had come, and the heavy smell of orange blossom showed that the orchards of the town were near. From end to end the long and narrow bridge across the frontier river was crammed with struggling fugitives. Men and women tore at each other's clothes in their haste; children were crushed into the niches of the walls, and remained there shrieking with fear, unable to force their way back into the solid and moving crowd. Cattle and goats leapt on the low parapets, and were pushed down into the white stream that roared between the arches. The one longing was for escape, and now it seemed so near. But light

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was increasing, and who could tell how close the enemy might be by dawn?

Kephalas struggled over with the rest, and as he reached the further side the first tinge of gold appeared in the eastern sky behind the fortress, from which the two big six-inch guns protected the road. Standing beside an orange tree close to the river bank, he saw the same woman with the cradle and the calf. She had laid them down at her feet now, and was anxiously watching the stream of confused and hurrying forms that were driven violently out from the mouth of the bridge, and scattered themselves slowly over the gardens and lanes of the ancient town.

"I've not seen the man with the quilt," said Kephalas.

"No matter," she answered, again using the commonest of all Greek phrases, and turning her eyes on him only for a single moment. "Perhaps he kept in front, and yet I came pretty quick."

Dismounting to let the horse drink, he stood at her side and watched the people as they passed. The haggard light of morning was now upon their sleepless faces; women almost hidden under their enormous burdens, children crawling

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along too tired to cry any more, men still trying with curses and blows to keep together what was left of their few sheep or cattle—all passed wearily on and began to settle down under trees or walls, like wandering picnics of misery. The soldiers came sullenly too, and flung themselves down in the ditches to sleep. All at once, from the midst of a group of them, a man forced his way out and came hurrying towards Kephalas and the woman, waving his hand to her in joyful greeting.

"Here I am. I've got through safe!" he cried, springing over a ditch with a kind of childish triumph.

Kephalas looked at the woman, and saw that her face was pale and rigid as stone.

"Where is the quilt?" she whispered.

"Oh, bother the quilt," said the man. "I had enough to do to save myself. But it's all right now. I knew I should find you here."

"Where is the quilt?" she said again, as if she had not heard.

"Oh, what does the quilt matter? I threw it away at the bend of the road, just as we came to the marsh. I tell you I had enough to do to save myself. What does a quilt matter?"

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"The child was in it," she said, and for a while they stood motionless, looking at each other.

Kephalas turned away, and pretended to be occupied with his horse, that stood with drooping head, too tired to feed.

"Nothing can be done, nothing," he heard the man say, and when he looked again, the man was sitting beside the calf with his head hidden in his hands; but the woman had not moved. Her eyes were fixed on a far distance, beyond the point where the road was lost to sight.

Kephalas went up to the man and touched him on the shoulder.

"Where was it?" he asked.

"I've told you," the man said moodily. "I threw the thing away just at the bend of the road where we came to the marsh. How was I to know?"

"Wait for me here. Wait till midday," said Kephalas, and mounting hastily, he urged the tired and frightened horse straight out into the river, instead of making any vain attempt to force a way back over the crowded bridge.

The water, rushing from the mountain snows, foamed against the saddle and drenched him to to the waist. But he cared neither for cold nor

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danger now, and he felt neither hunger nor fatigue. His one thought was whether the horse would stand against the flood. It shivered and groaned with terror, but at last it reached the shallows and staggered up the opposite bank. Shouting and waving his sword as though he bore some special order from the general, he cleared a path through the dust and crowd, which grew thinner as he hurried wildly back along the road. Within a mile of the bridge he passed the very hindmost of the fugitives limping drearily after the rest, and often looking behind in terror. The way was strewn with pieces of garments, bedding, and furniture. Rifles lay flung aside upon the banks. Cattle and sheep had sunk down to die, unable to crawl further, or crushed and maimed in the panic. They looked at him with appealing eyes, but the road was clear now, and spurring the horse into a tottering canter, he pressed on and on, conscious only of one purpose —to reach the top of the marsh before the enemy came down. Everything else had become a dim and meaningless dream. All his unhappiness had gone. Shame, uncertainty, and self-reproach were silent. He who yesterday morning had started with the cry, "To Constantinople!" did

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not even think of his purpose now. Could it be for a miserable little child he was going? He neither knew nor cared why he was going. His whole life was concentrated in the passionate desire to hasten on and to arrive.

The sun rose, and everything became visible upon the mountains and the steaming plain, but no living thing was in sight. Suddenly, far in front of him, he saw the curve of the road where the marsh began. He drew in his breath, and called to the horse. But the poor creature could canter no further, and gradually fell to a walk. Slowly they came nearer and nearer to the place. It was now hardly three hundred yards away—if he were sighting a rifle on it, he thought dreamily to himself, he would sight at three hundred yards. But he must be careful now, or he would miss the very thing he was looking for. What was he looking for? It was something red—yes, certainly it was something red. He let the bridle fall loose upon the horse's neck, and walked on, just watching the sides of the road in front with half-closed eyes.

"Something red—something red," he kept murmuring to himself, and then suddenly, "Why look! There is something red!"

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At the same moment the sharp report of a rifle near in front waked him with a start, and once more he heard the terrible growl of a bullet passing close to his side.

* * * * *

"I'm dying of hunger," said the man, leaning back against the stem of the orange tree.

The woman made no answer. She was seated at the top of the river bank, with her chin sunk upon her knees and her eyes fixed in one immovable gaze upon the now empty road beyond the bridge.

"Aren't you hungry?" he asked after a while.

"No," she replied, without turning her head.

"The calf's dying," he went on presently. "I had better kill it before it dies. We've got nothing else to eat."

"All right," she said.

He took the calf a little way along the bank and cut it in pieces with the long knife he carried in his belt. Then he went down to the river and washed the blood off his hands and arms.

"Now we've got nothing to cook it with," he said. "All the wood here is green."

The woman said nothing and seemed as if she

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had not heard. He stood up and looked round anxiously for a while.

"We might break up the cradle now," he said at last.

"Never!" she cried, tightening her hands together. And both were silent.

"I'm dying of hunger," he repeated at length; "and after all, it's no good dying. The cradle's the only wood we've got. Ten to one we shan't want it again."

"All right," she said. "He can sleep in my arms."

He went back to the tree, and putting one foot into the middle of the cradle, he tore off the hood and broke away the sides and rockers. The wood cracked and shrieked as it gave. Then with his knife he cut the bits up into lengths, and set aside some thin chips and shavings for the kindling. Taking three large stones, he laid the wood between them, and fitted the cooking-pot on to the top till it stood firm.

"Now we'll soon have something to eat," he said, fetching some portions of the calf and trimming them up with his knife. "Get some water, and give me the matches."

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She did not move, and, turning to her sharply, he cried, "Get some water, will you?"

But her face was now hidden between her knees, and her hands stretched out as if to ward off some terrible thing that was approaching.

He looked up and saw a man on horseback coming slowly along the road the other side of the bridge. He was leaning far forward, and the horse's head and neck almost hid him from sight. The peasant watched him anxiously, and said, "He hasn't got the quilt."

The woman's face sank lower between her knees.

"I told him exactly where I threw it," the man went on, "but perhaps it slid down into the water."

The woman clasped her hands together and shuddered.

"He's coming near now," said the man; "I can see him quite plain. He's leaning forward in a queer sort of way. His horse can't do much more than walk. Now he's at the other end of the bridge. I'll go and meet him. It's no good, he hasn't got the quilt, but I'll go and meet him. There's no danger now."

The woman heard him go. With bowed head,

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and fingers tightly interlaced around her knees, she sat immovable.

Before her closed eyes she saw only that little form round which she had so carefully wrapt the quilt and tied it safe. He must have been hungry, and at the thought of his hunger sharp spasms of pain shot through her breasts. He had died slowly of hunger, and now he was growing cold. Or he was lying deep at the bottom of a black and poisonous pool. Or perhaps he was not dead yet; he was still warm in the quilt; he was waking up and crying for her, and there was no one to hear him cry—her little child—alone upon the deserted road! Some Turk would find the quilt; he would unroll it, would see that tender little body!

A horse's hoofs came slowly down the slope from the bridge; they came towards her across the grass. Someone stood at her side, someone drew her gently backward, and laid something on her lap. She opened her eyes, and the wondering grey eyes of the child met hers.

Instantly he stretched up his hands with little cries of hunger. With open mouth he sought about her dress, and clung to her fingers that trembled with haste. A few more cries and

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eager struggles as she tore the stuff away, a few comfortable little sounds and sighs, and then he was still. She bent over him that the very light of day might not come between them again.

"What's the matter? Are you hurt?" said her husband's voice beside her.

"I think I am," said another voice.

Her husband touched her shoulder. "Look," he said, "the officer's wounded."

"What officer?" she asked, holding the child closer to her heart.

But without raising her head she looked sideways, and there on the deep grass lay Kephalas close beside her. One hand was caught up by the bridle, but he held it no more. His face was yellow and opaque; the eyes were slowly closing down, and a film gathered over them; the lips were blue and open, and a thin line of blood ran from them down his cheek.

"Child all right?" he murmured, and the blood ran quicker.

"Only hungry—all right now," she said, and without moving her body she tore up some grass and wiped the blood away.

"That's something," he said, and the blood came again.

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"You are badly hurt?" she asked.

"No matter," he said, and sank quietly into deep unconsciousness.

Her husband slit the uniform open with his knife, and there, low down on the right side, was a little purple hole.

For a while the heavy breathing went on, interrupted by gasping struggles with the blood that welled up in the throat, and then it suddenly stopped in one deep sigh. At the same moment the baby fell back from the breast, sighing also, and stretching out his little limbs so that he might the better settle down into sleep.

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PYTHAGORAS AT ARGOS

Arrived from far, he trod the remembered ways
  Of that grave town, where he was wont to be
With heroes old of far resounding days,
  Gathered for wandering wars by land or sea.

There crumbling over a sculptured tomb he found
  The rusted armour he himself did wear,
Battling long since at Troy, and underground
  Lay his own body, long since crumbling there.

Even so, in wandering through the haunted nave
  Of time's old church, I saw against a stone
A panoply of love, hung over a grave,
  Where lies a rigid body once my own.

Why waste a thought on long-forgotten men,
  Or spell the record of those fading lines?
Sweet life is sweeter to me now than then,
  And round my heart a nobler armour shines.

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VII

CORPUS CHRISTI

THE scene is at Seville; it is early morning, June 9th, 1898; the sky is already deep blue but only strips of it can be seen inside the town, for the streets are narrow, and the route of the great Corpus Christi procession is protected from the sun by bulging sheets, carpets, and lengths of brilliant canvas stretched across from house to house. Carts are going up and down with water and wet sand to cool the pavements; the city dustmen are strewing myrtle leaves, orange, and laurel, which fill the streets with a refreshing smell. The fronts of the white and green houses are hung with calico festoons, usually scarlet and yellow, the colours of Spain. In the balconies the richer classes are gradually taking their places. The main streets are crowded, but a passage for the procession is being rather ineffectively cleared by a line battalion of conscripts, who are under orders to start for

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Cuba that afternoon. In a top flat in one of the poorer streets Doña Carolina is making ready for the holiday. Her daughter Pepita, a slight black-eyed girl of sixteen, is helping her; Isidro, a round-faced boy of seven, with hair cut close to his head, runs about upsetting things. The mother carries a baby with one arm round his body, whilst with the other hand she puts the final touches to her beauty. The baby whimpers most of the time. The walls are decorated with pretty pictures of saints and the funeral cards of the rest of the family.

Doña Carolina speaks: "Pepita, don't look so ill, and, oh, catch hold of Isidro! Naughty boy, to go climbing out of the window, and I can't think why your aunt Teresa doesn't come. Does this bodice show the dirt, Pepita? Here's the sun pouring in. It must be six o'clock, and the procession starts punctually between ten and twelve, if only they can get it off. I asked a priest. But your aunt's just like your dear father—always asleep. Now do leave Isidro alone for a minute, child, and hold baby, whilst I do up my back hair again. That's better. I think two carnations will be enough on top. But I don't know, perhaps three's best, now the war's

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on. Carnations for the patriot, they say, and it's God's mercy we're not off to Cuba. Don't stand gaping there, Pepita; give me the embroidered Philippine. Now is that on straight? It *is* a lovely shawl, certainly. Your dear father gave it to me before you were thought of. Is the crimson flower just in the middle of my back, and does the parrot's beak show? Then it must be right, the point in the very centre. And yet, somehow, it doesn't seem like Corpus Christi Day. It's the war, I suppose. Now I'll see to baby, and for goodness sake, child, don't look so white. You won't want much powder to-day, but you'd better put a little on. It isn't ladylike to look pale without powder. One carnation is enough for a child's hair, but where on earth did you get that rose to stick in your dress? I never did like to see vanity in one so young.

Oh, look at Isidro, he's rolling on the floor again! Isidro, darling, do try to be good, remember you've been washed to-day. I only wish that tiresome aunt of yours would come. It's too aggravating of her, everybody will get the best places. But there's no depending on that side of the family, and I've often told your dear father so. Oh, here she is! I can hear her

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panting. Pepita, run and open the door. My dear Teresa, how glad I am to see you! You're just in lovely time. Yes, those stairs are a little trying, even if one isn't exactly old. Never mind, we're just ready to march off, as those poor soldiers say. Oh, Pepita, you've forgotten to hang out the decorations. Quick! bring the coloured counterpane off the big bed, and throw your crimson mattress over that end of the balcony. That's what's called a patch of colour. Now I think we're ready. Just one last look round. Oh, you needn't be in such a desperate hurry, Teresa, there's plenty of time. Let me see, have we got everything? Did you put in the wine for me and your aunt, Pepita? And the nuts? I think that's all. Don't be impatient, Teresa dear, we must take plenty to eat. We shall have about four hours to wait at the very least. Now come along. Just let me feel if I've forgotten the key. Yes! what a mercy I remembered! It's in my other pocket. That's what comes of having two dresses. Just run and get it, Pepita. There's no hurry, Teresa. Don't cry, baby. Going to see pretty soldiers! Pepita, what are you doing? Look, there's Isidro crawling down the stairs head first."

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They go into the streets and make their way towards the cathedral.

The mother continues: "Oh, what a crowd! Keep close to me, Teresa. Pepita, take Isidro's hand and mind the basket. The decorations aren't up to much this year. That's those pigs of Yankees—everything dear, everything bad, just because the Yankees are pigs! It doesn't seem reasonable to me. You know those people just below us, Teresa? Well, their son Benito starts for Cuba with the soldiers this very day. Pepita, don't upset the basket. Such a nice-looking boy, and quite refined! When I got up in the night for baby, I heard somebody crying and crying. It must have been his poor mother; it sounded quite close. Oh, Pepita, just look where Isidro's got to—right in the road by that cart! Well, I never! if it isn't the bullcart! Look, he's peeping under the door for a sight of the bull! Isn't he clever? They're going to kill six bulls this afternoon in honour of Corpus Christi. Come back to his mother, then! Such a brave boy! Did you feel his breath, then, all hot from his nose, and see a bit of his horn? There's a darling! Run along with Pepita, my precious; he shall kill a nice bull soon himself, he shall.

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Well, anyhow, Teresa, it's better killing bulls in Seville than going to be killed in Cuba like poor Benito. They'd never waste a bull-fighter on a war.

For heaven's sake, don't stop staring about, Pepita. No, child, I'm not going to stand here. I sent your dear father on before the sun was up, to lie along the cathedral steps till we came, and keep places for five. I wouldn't stop here for the world. But, after all, I don't know; it's certainly a very good place. What do you think, Teresa? Pepita says we'd best stop here. Just take baby a minute. We can sit on the kerbstone. We've got the provisions, and their dear father can quite well go on lying down. Baby, look at the pretty soldiers. You see, Teresa, they've got their knapsacks on, ready to start; and I declare if that isn't Benito just in front of us! Now he's looking round. Wave the basket to him, Pepita. Poor boy, he does look sad; he looks as if he had lost a summer, as they say. Pepita, don't let Isidro get between the soldiers' legs. It does seem hard to go and be shot when you're so nice-looking. Think of his poor parents! He's much too handsome for that sort of thing. I hardly like to think of it,

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but the Yankees always strip the dead. Pepita, you must not get so near the soldiers. Look, Teresa, here's our priest coming through the crowd. Now, children, kiss his hand as he passes.

Do you really think Pepita's getting pretty? Well, Teresa, it's very nice of you to say so. For a long time I thought she was going to take after her dear father. Pepita, why didn't you kiss the priest's hand? Oh, there's nothing to blush about! Aren't children queer things, Teresa? There's Benito trying to turn round to us again. Oh, here's the man with the face of Christ on the handkerchiefs. Only a halfpenny! You might lend me a halfpenny, Teresa. I'll pay you back, and I'm sure it would be good for Isidro. Ah, it's cheaper to be good now than when we were young. Here, Isidro, look at the pretty handkerchief your auntie's bought you for a present! Tie it round his neck, Pepita, and now let's settle down and be patient. I told you there was no hurry. Should we have something to eat now or wait? Pepita, give your aunt a bit of cuttle-fish and some olives. Yes, Teresa dear, the child is becoming quite useful, as you say. You see,

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I never let her out of my sight for a single moment, and that's the best training a girl can have."

They sit on the pavement waiting for about two hours. The soldiers stand at ease and talk to their friends; Benito turns half round, leaning on his rifle, but does not speak to anyone. Inside the cathedral the ancient dance of ten boys before the altar is going on, and now and then the sound of the church music and the rattle of castanets comes down the street through the open doors. At last a stir in the balconies shows that the silver cross which heads the procession is in sight.

The mother continues: "Now they're coming! Take the baby whilst I get up, Teresa. Now, Pepita, be ready to hold up Isidro whenever a saint comes by. Here's the cross. Look, baby, pretty! Isn't it lovely, Teresa? Think what a lot of silver! And now who's this next? Why, if it isn't the little boy with the fish! Look, Isidro, can you see the pretty fish? Hold him up, Pepita. Yes, darling, those are men's legs underneath, carrying him along. Isn't he clever, Teresa? He sees everything. Here are the two saints with our big tower, and here's the lady with the lambs. Look, baby, dear little lambs. I declare,

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Teresa, they've got paper carnations stuck in their mouths to eat! That's to show they're patriots, bless their little hearts! Did you say the lady is St. Agnes, sir? Thank you very much. How's one to know? But you mustn't be too particular; all saints are good, thank God. And here's a bishop or somebody, and here's a sort of king. Ah, I know what's coming now! It's the blessed Virgin herself. Look at her poor dear heart all bare and bleeding. She's the saint for me, after all. Hail, Mary! Blessed and hallowed be the day, blessed and hallowed be the day on which Thou didst appear in the flesh at Saragossa! Poor thing, she's black, you see, Teresa! The best Virgin's always black. It must be very queer to be black all over. Don't talk, Teresa; here's the Corpus Christi itself. Do you hear the people kneeling down? Now's the time to pray. Pepita, just untie Isidro's new handkerchief and spread it on the stones to save my dress. It's my best dress, Teresa, or I wouldn't take it, really I wouldn't."

In an enormous silver shrine of ancient workmanship, the sacred wafer of Christ's body is carried slowly past. All the people on both sides of the street fall on their knees and clasp their

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hands in adoration. The soldiers on guard along the gutters also kneel, but when the shrine has passed they slowly fall in, two deep, and march behind it. As Benito rises, Pepita rises too, and gives him both her hands. He takes her in his arms, and says—

"Heart of my heart, a long one for the last!" His rifle and the contents of her basket, wine-bottle and all, crash on the paving-stones.

The mother, starting up from her devotions: "Pepita! what on earth are you doing? Let go of him this minute! Teresa, take baby, and I'll pull her away. You shameful child, and everybody looking! 'For the last,' indeed! And when was the first, you wicked, wicked girl? What's been the good of all my care? Teresa, if you dare to look like that, or say another word, I shall cry; and you might have finished that last drop of wine; look, it has splashed all over my best dress!"

An officer shouts, "Fall in, that man! Fall in there! Forward by the left." Benito marches on with the rest, Pepita's rose in his mouth.

"There, there Pepita, don't cry, dear, don't cry. It's all right. He's gone now. Down on your knees, so that the people won't see you, and pray

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to St. Agnes and our Lady to forgive you all your sins, before they turn the corner."

But Pepita was praying to Santa Rita alone, the saint to whom all men pray. For Santa Rita is the only saint who has the blessed privilege of granting the impossible.

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AT THIRTY-FIVE

Now in the centre of life's arch I stand,
  And view its curve descending from this day;
How brief the road from birth's mysterious strand!
  How brief its passage till it close in grey!
Yet by this bridge went all the immortal band,
  And the world's saviour did not reach half-way.

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VIII

THE RELIEF OF EDEN

OVER the couchant lion of Bulwana the sun rose silently into a clear and empty sky, and like a red sword his first ray struck the besieged village where people starved. Instantly in the very middle of his disc a violet cloud of smoke leapt from the mountain top, and the boom of a heavy gun sounded over the plain. Before a pulse could beat three times, came the whisper, the hum, and the shriek of a huge shell flying above the eucalyptus trees round little Juliet's cottage, and with a crash that shook the windows it exploded among a little cluster of tents just across the river. The scattered fragments of iron buzzed slowly away through the air, or plunged into the ground with a sudden thud, and all was still.

"Mother!" cried Juliet, sitting up on her blanket in a corner of the room. "Mother! It's time to get up."

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But almost before she spoke, a slight and agile figure, covered in soft white from neck to foot, had sprung to the door and was standing under the verandah, gazing intently at the scene upon the opposite bank. Men were hurrying about, shouting to each other, and dragging their horses under cover. She looked, and looked again, shading her eyes with a thin, brown hand, though the sun was behind her.

She was turning away with the sigh of relaxed anxiety when whistles, thrice repeated, blew from the neighbouring camps, and a little further downstream rose the cry of the Hindoo, mounted on a heap of sandbags to watch the great gun all day long. The sentries had seen the flash; another shell was coming, and was coming their way. Holding her breath, the woman looked again. Far behind her she heard the boom of the gun's discharge, then the quick whisper, the shriek, and the bewildering crescendo of noise, coming so close that it made her shrink together and crouch down, though she kept her eyes still fixed upon those little tents. Clean through the eucalyptus over the cottage the thing crashed, and plunged into the river at her feet, throwing up a great column of yellow water and white

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foam. Twigs and branches from the tree fell twinkling down upon the iron roof.

From the next room a shaky old voice was heard singing—

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care!"

"Mother!" cried Juliet, "come in quick and dress. It's always bad when Mr. Ferguson begins to sing."

"Coming, dearest," said Celestine, with a last look across the river to where the tents were standing, thickly browned over with earth and ochre to make them less visible to the enemy.

But before she had finished pulling on her delicate red silk stockings, the whistles blew again and another shell splashed into a soft garden-bed beside the cottage, and burst with a muffled explosion underground, upheaving a cluster of scarlet lilies and scattering them high in air.

"Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons through the flowering thorn,"

sang old Ferguson, and as he sang he rushed out

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of the house, seized a pick, and called to a Kaffir boy to help him dig up the fragments.

But Nicodemus had crept into the empty coal-shed, and lay cowering there in the confiding belief that its tin sides and roof could save from death. Juliet heard him muttering to himself with terror, and looking from her window as she waited for her mother to tie the back tapes of her little garments, she saw his grotesque face peering round the corner of the shed, his enormous mouth wide open, and his distended eyes fixed on the edge of mountain which hurled the thunderbolt. In the midst of the explosion's faint smoke stood Mr. Ferguson, and his pick clinked merrily against the lumps of iron in the lily-bed, while all the time he sang of coming through the rye.

"Have you got him, Mr. Ferguson?" Juliet called out in her clear little voice. "Have you got him?"

"Ay, I've got him right enough, my dear," said old Ferguson, looking up at the sound. "That little hummin'-bird hatched out well!"

"I wonder *at* you, James!" cried a very different voice from a distance, and the head

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of a poor irritated woman was seen projecting like an "Aunt Sally" above the red sand where the bank fell steeply down to the river; "I wonder *at* you fooling about there, and next minute we may all be in eternity!"

"That's where we're always praying to be," said her husband. "But there's no hope of that just now. I've never known Boers pitch a shell into the same hole twice. They're too savin' for that."

"How much longer are you going to keep me waiting for my breakfast?" the woman shouted again from her entrenchment.

"Go on without me, my dear," said Ferguson; "I'm not hungry this morning. I had some of that chevril the day before yesterday. I'll stop and bring the child down."

"The child!" muttered the woman to herself; "it's always the child!"

Boom came another shell, singing high through the air, and her head instantly disappeared.

Juliet watched the old man turn back to his digging, and behind her she heard her mother hurriedly clicking the fastenings of her slim corset. Another shell buzzed through the air

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and burst on the road near the Intelligence Office.

"You had better go down without me, darling," said Celestine; "we're so late this morning, and the Boers seem very busy."

"I must just go and see my little Chucky first," Juliet answered, and ran round the verandah to a little shed at the back of the house, from which a low clucking came to greet her footsteps.

She pushed the door open softly, and there found the joy of her heart—a little brown hen which old Ferguson had given her in the early days of the siege, and had let her keep even when its value rose sixpence a day for weeks together. Except Mrs. Ferguson, the whole household knew of its existence, but they were bound by a conspiracy of silence never to speak of it, and Mrs. Ferguson was always in the riverside burrow from dawn to roosting time. So every day Juliet went to visit her joy with the delightful excitement of secrecy.

But this morning the hen did not get up and pick about as usual. She lay cuddling in the dust, only clucking to herself in the satisfied tone of accomplished duty. Juliet put out her little

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ivory hand, so delicately fashioned, and tried to stroke her. But at that the hen sprang up in alarm and suddenly revealed a little white egg lying on the sand. Had it been a great white diamond Juliet could not have been more astonished.

Wonderingly she took it up, all warm and clean, while the hen watched her with a bright brown eye and clucked in apprehension. Who should have it to eat? Juliet asked herself, and she thought of her mother and old Ferguson and black Nicodemus in turn. But in her heart she had already given it to the dear soldier who rode across the river to see her every day, and sometimes brought his tiny ration of sugar as a present. He should have her treasure, and she would give it him in secret. For she loved him more than anyone else.

Wrapping the nice white thing in some withered grass, she put it in an old box where the hen could not get to it, and ran round to the front garden full of the hidden joy which makes the whole world look gay. Old Ferguson took her in his arms, but was too weak with hunger to carry her far, and they went hand in hand across the reddish road and down a little track

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over the edge of the river bank. A few feet above the water level, he and Nicodemus had there scooped out a deep cavern, with a flat platform of earth at its mouth. In its shelter the family had spent the hours of daylight ever since the bombardment began. For four months they had sat there day after day till all were worn out with hunger and disappointment—all but Celestine, who seemed to grow happier and more beautiful on hope deferred.

At the turn of the steep path the old man and Juliet came in view of Mrs. Ferguson, seated with her two elbows on her knees, and her sharp chin between her hands, gazing with all the latent violence of desperate resignation at Nicodemus, who was trying to boil a cauldron on some green sticks beside the river.

"Oh, you've got hold of that child at last, have you?" she cried, without looking round, but tapping the sand irritably with one foot; "I've no patience with people who can't get up at decent times among the horrors of war. What's the good of all these shells flying about if people pay no more attention to them than if they were potatoes wanting to be dug, and keep me waiting for my breakfast? Not that it

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matters much to-day, for there isn't any breakfast, and it's better to die of shells than starvation."

"Why," said Ferguson, "where's the rations I drew last night at the market hall?"

"It's all your fault," his wife replied, her smouldering fury now ablaze. "It was through climbing that bank to see if you were coming that I upset all the tea and sugar, so we've nothing left but those relics of a horse, and I'm not going to cook them in the morning and leave nothing for dinner. We'll have to go hungry, and that's what I've always kept telling you would happen ever since you brought that person to live under the same roof with me. You know who I mean, so I needn't name her, to spare the child's feelings."

"Well, what could I do?" the old man protested. "She had nowhere to go, and I was acquainted with her in Johannesburg. I've often told you so."

"You have, Mr. Ferguson, you have indeed! At the Gaiety Theatre of Varieties, wasn't it, that you became acquainted, as you call it? I think you said it was called the tornado dance she used to whirl her legs about in? No

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wonder she wears red stockings, that's all I say!"

"Yes," said her husband absently. "Dutch farmers used to ride a hundred miles across the veldt to see her, and never want to go back. Oh well," he added, "that's a long time ago. That was before she married, and what does it all matter now?"

"Oh, I'm not saying that anything matters," she replied; "I suppose you're the best judge of that. Only what I do hate to see is yellowish, whitey-brown sort of people dressing themselves up and giving themselves airs side by side with British Colonials that were born white, like me. And as to being married, what I keep wondering is how she comes to be here and her husband goodness knows where, and a certain gentleman crossing the drift every day of the week to play with a certain little girl."

"I wonder you like to be always talking such things before the child, woman," said the old man angrily.

"If it comes to wondering, there are many things *I* wonder at," his wife replied serenely; "and all I say is, tornadoes are very good things in their proper place, but I won't have any tor-

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nado dancing in my house, no, nor in my burrow either!"

Hunger and irritation at the loss of the rations had inflamed Mrs. Ferguson's customary sense of propriety to prophetic heat, and as though spurning a filthy world she shook the sand violently from her skirts and tucked them tight round her knees, while she continued to mutter to herself, "No, thank you! No tornado dancing in my burrow, if you please!"

"There's no talk of tornadoes or anything of the sort," old Ferguson broke out at last; "all we've got to think of now is keeping ourselves alive."

"And that's hard enough," she retorted, "with you making me spill all the rations down the bank—you and that Cape girl of yours!"

"Don't talk like that before the child, woman," he said, and taking Juliet on his knee he began to sing, "Charlie is my darling, my darling, my darling."

"The child! It's always the child!" the woman muttered. "If I'd ever had a child, you'd know a child more or less is neither here nor there!"

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Beyond a vague sense of something disagreeable, like medicine, Juliet had attached no meaning whatever to the conversation. It was only grown-ups' talk, and she was thinking all the time of that beautiful white egg and the joy of her hero when she gave it him. But suddenly she began to wriggle away from the old Scot, for she heard her mother coming down the bank, and ran to throw her arms round her knees with the relief of entire security. Among all the squalor and misery of the starving town, the pervading smell of sickness and death, the litter of tin cans and barbed wire, the torn and blackened uniforms of the men who crawled along the bank, their faces pallid and thin-drawn, and their legs bent with feebleness, Celestine was certainly a refreshing sight. She was dressed in semi-transparent white, like one thin lily, except for a touch of scarlet at her breast, repeated on one side of the large hat, and again in the offending stockings just seen below her skirt. The soft brown eyes, in a strangely mobile face, seemed full of youthful happiness and health. One would have said it was Juliet's face, only inscribed with a brief series of gentle and sweet-hearted records to delight mankind.

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"What, Jule, you'll throw me down!" she cried, swinging the child up with the grace of practised strength. There was ever so slight a foreign accent in her voice. "Good morning, Mrs. Ferguson," she went on, with a smile of pity at the poor woman's disconsolate attitude. "I do hope your unhappiness is better?"

Mrs. Ferguson gave one quick look at the cheerful face with its impudent little nose and long, smiling lips. Then she said with much deliberation, "I thank you kindly, Mrs. —Mrs.——"

"Rosendal," Celestine quietly suggested, as if to help her memory.

"I thank you again," Mrs. Ferguson went on. "I never can remember your proper married name, and whether it's Boer or Jew or something else foreign is more than I know. But everybody knows your maiden name, if I may so call it, through seeing it stuck about on the boardings years ago, with a picture—such a picture! However, as I was going to say, as to unhappiness, I never was one to enjoy myself and dress up in cheap finery when better people than me were dying by their thousands of fever and starvation and shells. Not but what I

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envy those who can—of course I do—those who can!"

"I'm sure you must indeed," said Celestine. "You've no idea how splendid it is to feel really happy. It must be terribly trying for you to be always miserable. But come along, Jule, we'll go down and help Nicodemus make the tea."

"There isn't any tea," said Mrs. Ferguson, drawing herself together with the profound satisfaction of those that bring evil tidings. "You and Ferguson made me upset it through climbing up the bank to see why you weren't coming; and if you doubt my word, look in the sand and you'll find a quarter of an ounce of tea and four ounces of sugar mixed up in my footmarks. That's the rations the Imperial Home Government give for four mouths after commandeering our store. No wonder we're loyal—we Colonials!"

"All the tea and sugar gone! Well, that is bad luck," said Celestine.

"Not that I mind," Mrs. Ferguson went on, "for I've lost my appetite this morning through seeing a mule's head cut off close beside that tent there, where your gentleman friend lives,

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and I thought to myself, 'That's a narrow squeak for the gentleman who's so fond of Mrs. What's-her-name's little girl!'"

Realising the fate of the day's sugar, Juliet began to whimper quietly to herself.

"Never mind, Jule," said her mother, "we'll go and help with the mealy-meal."

"Hate mealy-meal," sobbed the child.

"So do I," said Celestine, "but we'll call it eggs and all manner of lovely things."

At the thought of eggs the child remembered her secret joy, and they went down to the fire, where Nicodemus was stirring the little saucepan of porridge that was to serve for four, not counting the scrapings for himself. As he looked up with the smile of an affectionate dog, Juliet ran and laid her little ivory arm across his bare, black shoulders. Celestine was following when she caught the peculiar smell which clings even to the best-washed Kaffir, and she turned quickly away, involuntarily shuddering.

Nicodemus raised his onyx eyes, tinged with yellow, to the pure onyx eyes of the girl, and smiled again with good-humoured welcome. "Plenty ready now, plenty ready," he said.

"Zulu, speak Zulu, little Jule loves Zulu,"

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she answered coaxingly, and he repeated the words in the soft and pleasant tongue.

"Come here, Juliet, come here at once!" her mother called, and the Kaffir, in surprise, looked for a moment at the slim, white figure, standing there, so exquisitely dressed. Then he slowly drew in his breath through his broad, distended nostrils, looked at her again, and went on stirring the porridge.

Breakfast began, and Juliet did her best to swallow the dreary stuff and imagine her mother's magnificent new name for every spoonful was reality, while Mrs. Ferguson groaned and clutched her throat as though to keep things in their places when once it was down, and the old Scot varied his efforts with the lines beginning :—

> "Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
> Great chieftain o' the pudding-race."

Bit by bit he had reached the words :—

> "But mark the rustic, haggis fed,
> The trembling earth resounds his tread,"

when suddenly he stopped and listened, balancing his spoon in the air. There it came again—and there again! Something that did indeed make the trembling earth resound.

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"It's Buller!" he cried, springing up. "Buller's at them again! Nearer too, much nearer!"

All held their breath to listen. There the dull thunder came, like a muffled hammer beating on a huge iron tank.

"Cheer up, my darling, cheer up!" he cried, catching hold of the child. "Little Jule soon get enough to eat now—real bread and butter, real milk, real sugar soon!"

He sank down again from weakness, but at every sound of the guns he kept joyfully murmuring, "There—there—there!"

"Bah!" said Mrs. Ferguson, licking the remains of the mealy-meal from the back of her spoon. "It's three months now since first we heard those guns, and do you think Buller's a yard nearer? Not him! Every time I hear those guns I go round in the afternoon for more medical comforts, that's what I do! I just go up to the Colonel at the back of Elling's store, and I say to him, 'Colonel, I'm dying for want of medical comforts, and if you doubt my word, look at my tongue!' Then I put out my tongue as far as it'll go for him to see, and he always gives me something. That's the way to deal with

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the Imperial army. Buller indeed! I'd Buller him!"

Celestine said nothing, but putting an arm round the child she listened intently and ate no more. With half-turned head it seemed as though she heard some dreaded footstep approaching at every rumble of the sound.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid, Mrs. What's-your-name," the other woman went on; "for those that enjoy starving and seeing their children and other people starve, there's plenty of time still. Nothing but skeletons will Buller find if ever he does get in, and it's a comfort to think that one skeleton's much like another when we come to the bare bone, no matter what embroidered underlinen and whitey-brown flesh some people may have covered theirs up with."

"Yes," said Celestine cheerfully, "I always have a hope that all the nasty people in the world will get a clean start again at the resurrection."

"Look!" cried the old Scot; "who's this coming over the drift? Now we'll hear what's up."

"No need to ask who it is," said Mrs. Ferguson. "Ay, here he comes, bless him!

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It's really kind to be so attentive in visiting a poor old woman like me every day—let alone three or four times a day, and other times too, for all I know."

She laughed maliciously till she choked, and then she laughed again.

"Never you mind, Mrs.—Mrs.—whatever your proper married name may be. Never you mind what people say. You've always got the child with you—of course you have—wherever you go; so you're all right. You're not a poor unprotected female like me when Ferguson's away."

She fell to chuckling again, as rubbing her skinny hands together she watched the man ride down the steep path on the other side of the river and urge his horse into the deep water. With feet thrown forward so as to clear the surface, he looked across at the shelter and waved his arm. A tall, spare man he was, with grizzled hair and a face lined and burnt by hard South African life.

Juliet waved her hand in answer, and kept calling his name for joy. Now she could venture back with her hero, no matter how fast the shells flew, and give him her treasure in the hen-house.

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But he was in haste to-day, and turning aside from the main drift he rode downstream to the shelter, the yellow water gurgling round his horse's legs. Celestine went to the river's edge till her pointed little shoes were wetted, and she could just caress the starving horse's nose with the dainty fingers on which a row of sapphires shone. The soldier leant forward till he himself could touch her hand.

"It may be only a new shave," he said, "but it seems as if something was really happening at last. It isn't only the guns; the Intelligence people say the Dutch are shifting about in a queer kind of way, and the Colonel has sent me up the hill to have a look. Hullo, Jule dear! Very hungry, is it?"

"Ever so," said Juliet shyly, clinging to her mother's skirt.

"Never mind; soon get nice things now! Good-bye. I must be crawling on. By the way," he added, with just one glance at Celestine, "I may be doing a little sentry-go on my own about here to-night. I believe these filthy natives are still taking news through to the Dutch. Let me catch one, that's all! But good-bye—till we meet."

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He turned back to the drift, Juliet following him with loving eyes. Then she heard him encouraging his starving horse up the bank, while the poor beast coughed and coughed again with weakness.

"Mother," she said, looking up at Celestine, whose eyes were fixed on the running water, "if ever I marry, I'll marry him."

"Hush, dearest, hush!" said Celestine, and turned back to the mouth of the shelter, where she had to face the eyes and tongue that seemed to strip her naked before a whole world of women.

But Juliet's little black head was already full of a glorious plan, over which she sat happily brooding through the long, sweltering day, while at intervals the Dutch guns scattered shells about the town, and the old Scot came and went with alternate hope and despair. Celestine first recast the trimming of her hat, and then cut up one of her white petticoats into the queer semblance of a man's shirt.

"None of your fineries for me!" Mrs. Ferguson kept on declaring, as she watched her enviously. "I never was one to care about outsides, and dancing and kickshaws I abhor. Give

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me the woman that's clean and wholesome, and can make things comfortable about the house. I've got no vanities on me, and I'm not one to boast, but, thank God, I'm efficient. Yes, that's what I am—efficient."

Delighted with the word, she climbed on to the little table, upsetting Celestine's work-basket, and began sweeping the roof of the shelter, till table and chairs and everyone's clothes and hair were gritty with a fine layer of sand.

From end to end, the twelve miles horseshoe of defence lay silent, bare, and brown under the sun, for the big guns had not enough ammunition to reply any more, and the only sound was the occasional thud of a rifle or the muffled tread of uncertain footsteps, as little groups of soldiers padded along the road, asking from door to door for something to eat, and asking in vain because there was nothing left to give.

"Nothing but my egg!" thought Juliet with delight, as from the edge of the bank she watched them pass.

So the day wore on, till at last the sun dropped behind the long line of the Blaauwbank Hill, and darkness gathered once more around the miser-

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able garrison. The cave-dwellers crept back to their house; Nicodemus cooked the lump of horse, and in silence they struggled with it, gulping it down with a few spoonfuls of pounded biscuit. Then Celestine tenderly undressed the child and laid her to sleep in her corner. But as she was going out after saying good night, she turned back again from the door, and gently kissed the little flower-like body inch by inch, uttering soothing little sounds of pleasure, like a happy leopardess with her young, while Juliet laughed with pleasure, and clung to her waving black hair.

Left by herself, the child waited with shivering eagerness till a brilliant star appeared and the waning moon began to climb across the open window. All was still, except that now and then she heard Mrs. Ferguson coughing in the next room, and someone was cutting out with scissors: no doubt it was her mother. The old Scot always went into the town at night to collect the fantastic rumours that flitted up and down the street.

Very softly Juliet got up, and over her little white nightgown she folded a dark blanket, Zulu fashion. Noiseless as a cat, she swung herself

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out of the low window, her bare feet falling without a sound upon the sandy path. In trembling haste she ran to the shed. The hen fluttered and clucked, filling her with ghostly terrors. But holding her breath, she boldly threw open the door, seized her treasure from its box, and held the latch fast again before the crowded devils lurking in the corners had time to spring. Like a ghost's shadow herself, she sped down the garden path. The little white gate was open. She felt the deep red earth of the road soft under her tiny feet. She reached the withered grass under the acacias, where in the daylight she had seen cold chameleons with swivel eyes crawling among the branches. She stood on the edge of the steep bank. Far below, the black river murmured over the drift. Her breath came quickly, and she longed to call for her mother and be safe at home in her arms.

Suddenly a brilliant ball of light shot up above the Convent Ridge. They were firing star-shell from Observation Hill, and for a moment the world was turned to shining silver. She looked eagerly round. No one was there. No sentry was to be seen. The star went out, and a double darkness fell. Clutching the egg till it almost

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broke, she began to cry softly with terror and disappointment. Big tears ran down her face on to the Kaffir blanket. He was not there, and she was so frightened.

She longed to rush back to the house, but could not give up hope. Then she thought of the shelter; perhaps he had gone there as a secret place to watch the drift from. She found the top of the path, and, feeling at each step, stole down the bank in utter darkness, for it was turned away from the dim moon. Nearer and nearer sounded the terrifying murmur of the water, and now she had almost reached the sandy platform in front of the cavern's mouth. She peered anxiously before her, dreading what she might see, but could see nothing. She had just gathered up courage to whisper her hero's name, when above the hissing and gurgle of the river came a sound that froze her heart with an agony of fear.

There were people in the cave. They were talking quickly, but not loud—just as ghosts and devils talk.

"It is near the end now, very near the end," said a low voice.

"Oh no, no!" said another; "it shall never

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end! I could not endure it. Thank God, we shall all die here!"

Juliet could not move. She did not dare to run or cry out. It was a ghost that was speaking, with a voice—oh, how unlike her dear, dear mother's!

"One way or other it is bound to end within three weeks," said the other. "The men are starving. Before it ends, will you tell me one thing, and tell me the truth? All those years ago when first I loved you—five years, I suppose it must be——"

"It seems like nearly six minutes," said the woman.

"All those years ago, whenever it was. Why did you do that thing? Such a man as that—he wasn't much worse than anybody else, but you knew what people said of him. Why did you give yourself to a man like that? Why did you let him—let him—well, marry you, if that's the word?"

"Yes, dearest, that is the word. You don't know what that word means to such a girl as I was—a dancing-girl in Johannesburg. It was all wrong, I know; of course it was all wrong, as people say. And yet I was good enough for

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him. Oh, won't you understand? I was surely quite good enough for him!"

"You knew I would have done anything for you. You knew I would have married you. Why did you give yourself to him instead?"

"Oh, why does any woman do these things? What does it matter why?"

"I would have married you. You knew I would."

"Yes, I knew, I knew that. That was just the reason. I couldn't trust myself to say no to you any longer. It was just because I loved you—almost as much as I love you now. Oh, no, not nearly so much! I couldn't do it now."

There was a silence, and then she went on, speaking slowly but breathlessly, as one who knows the end is near and yet would ward it off.

"You were the only joy I ever had. You are still my dearest joy. You were all I ever wanted. You were always friendly and kind, you were what is called polite. Do you think those things make no difference to a woman, to such a woman as I was?"

"I was very fond of you, that was all. There

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was nothing strange in that. Everybody was fond of you."

"I know, dearest, I know; but that wasn't all. You were so different, and when you were everything to me, do you think I wanted to lose you? Do you think I wanted to see you turn away, or to have you always there and know that you despised me? Do you think I wanted to say the one little word that would make you shudder whenever you looked at me? Oh, my dearest, do you think I want to say it now?"

"Nothing you could say would have made the slightest difference either then or now. You could not have done worse things than I have done myself: no woman could."

"I know, dearest. It isn't what I have done that matters. You could forget all that. You are one of the men who could. But you could not have forgotten that other thing. You wanted to marry me. I should have had to tell you the truth then, and how could I have done it? I was good enough for that other man, truth or no truth. Surely I was good enough for him!"

"Tell me now, quick," he said; "he may be here to-morrow."

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"Listen then," she went on at last, "it will all have to end sometime, so listen. I must have been almost Juliet's age. We crossed a river, and for a day and night we struggled on through an empty country—my mother and I. Then we came to a kraal, full of brownish women and little brownish children about my size. My mother went up to a naked and shrivelled old woman and said, 'Mother, this is the Englishman's child. Keep her, and I will send you something nice every year. She is only in my way at Durban, because I'm going to be married.' Next morning she kissed me and cried and went away. She was the only thing that ever loved me till you came, and she went away."

The man said nothing, and she murmured, "Now you know."

Presently she went on in a quiet, dreary voice: "I was there a long time, I don't know how long. The old woman died, and they buried her under a heap of stones. An Englishman came in a waggon and saw me dancing with the other girls. He gave the chief a cow for me and took me away in the waggon to show as a curiosity. He called me the Baby of Basutoland or the Fairy Freak, and the men and women

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laughed to each other when they saw me. Then he sold me to a theatrical company because I could dance. Yes, I could dance, at all events. You know that. That was why you loved me first, my only true lover. Those were happy times!"

"You were then the 'Lovely Andalusian of Granada.'"

"I know, I know—and you loved me. I couldn't tell you then—not then."

"No, you couldn't tell me. You gave yourself to that other man."

"Oh, my dearest, why do you stab me to the heart? My heart is your own."

"Within a day or two he will very likely be here," the man went on in a little while. "He is sure to be in Maritzburg now looking after his big contract, and he will come up with the first convoy to see that he makes a big profit. When that is safe he will come for you. Will you give yourself to him again?"

"I would be burnt alive first!"

"Then what will you do?" he asked.

The woman moaned drearily. "I don't know," she said, "it doesn't much matter. It will be all over then."

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"I will tell you what to do," he answered slowly at last. "You remember those old times. You didn't know how the whole place laughed at me for caring for you. When you were suddenly married, they laughed more. Then I went up into Rhodesia with the expedition, and forgot about it till this war came, and here we are together. If you had told me in those old days, I believe it would have made no difference. But it might have done. You know what people feel about it."

"Yes," she said, "I know."

"Well, anyhow," he went on, "it makes no difference now. We have been four months together. I only ask you not to give me up again."

"Ah, dearest, if it were possible!"

"It is quite possible. At the relief you must get down to Durban in the ambulances. In the confusion no one will notice, and you must wait for me there till my time of service is up. Then we'll go to some other country, if that man is likely to be troublesome."

"Oh, my dearest, if only it were possible! Yes, I would wait for you—wait with joy. And with what joy I would receive you when you

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came! I would take you to my very heart—look! as I take you now."

"You understand, then, exactly what you have to do?"

"My beloved, my very dearest, the relief has not come yet. We have still a few more days of joy—a few hours more. You can never know how dear you are to me. Look, you can do with me what you like—whatever you like, dearest. I am all yours now, and no one else's ever again. See, I give you all my heart! Even outside it is not black, and inside it is all red as fire with love of you."

Again a dazzling star-shell floating far up into the quiet sky from the gun on Observation Hill.

"Be still, dear, be still. It is only the gun," he whispered, and then stopped short.

Standing on the sand outside the cavern's mouth was a little muffled figure, the white face and two white legs shining in the steely glare.

"Juliet!" cried the mother, and in a moment was kneeling at her side, clasping the child against her warm breasts and pouring out every word of love. The Kaffir blanket slipped down and left the little thing all white in the darkness.

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"O mother, mother!" she cried, clinging round Celestine's neck. "Is it really, really you? I was so frightened. Oh, I couldn't believe it was really you! You must never leave me again —never, never!"

"I never will, my sweet, I never, never will! Did she have a bad dream then and come out to look for mother?"

"No," said the child shyly; "got something for the soldier-man. It's a secret. Look!"

She opened her folded hand and showed the little white egg just visible there.

"It's for the soldier-man, 'cos he's so nice," she said.

"Dear thing!" said the soldier, "I grudge that man your child. She ought to have been ours."

"I know, dearest, I know she ought," Celestine cried. "But now she's only mine, and I can't leave her. Oh, never, never shall she go from me! They would take her away—he would send people to take her away! Not for love of her, but for hatred of me. People have no mercy, I have found that out. O my beloved, you see how impossible it all is!"

She had gathered the child up into her arms.

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Another star-shell swam into the sky, and for that one moment he saw her soft, wild eyes fixed upon him. When the light died suddenly away, she said, "Kiss the little one, dearest."

Juliet stretched up both her arms, and held the rough head tight to hers.

"Now kiss me," Celestine whispered, and in the midst of that long kiss she murmured with sobbing breath, "Good-bye, good-bye, my only lover."

"Why are you crying, mother?" Juliet asked, as she was being laid in her safe corner again. "Are you hungry?"

"Yes, dearest, hungry to death," said Celestine.

"So am I, and I've got pains, bad pains," said the child. "But never mind! Buller's coming soon with lots of things to eat."

"Soon, yes, soon!" said Celestine, and lay down beside her, that the warmth of her own body might deaden the child's pain.

"And then I can marry the soldier-man, can't I, mother?"

"Hush, dearest, hush," said Celestine.

Next morning when Nicodemus went down to light the fire, he found a raw egg broken upon

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the ground, and lying down on his stomach he licked it up, sand and all, with his soft, red tongue. And in the afternoon an advance party of the relief entered the town, and the sound of cheering reached the shelter of the riverside.

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A BALLAD OF GOD'S MERCY

"WHY do you crouch beside the gate?"
The good St. Peter said;
"From hour to hour you sit and wait
Since first you joined the dead.

"Go with the happy dead, and stand
Among the angelic host,
Go up into the blessed land,
And take the harp within your hand
Like every blessed ghost.

"Why do you gaze between the bars
Down to the black abyss
Where the sun wallows, and the stars
Twinkle with sin, and o'er the din
Of hell the comets hiss.

"Go where the mystic waters run,
And there is never night,
Nor stars at all, nor any sun,
For God is all their light.

"Why do you batter at the lock?
Ah, many knock in vain!
To enter in how many knock!
But none to leave again.

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"Go to the New Jerusalem
With walls of jewelled stone,
Behold the Lamb who dwells in them,
Behold the Maid of Bethlehem,
Behold the Great White Throne!"

"Oh what to me the crystal sea?
Oh what the Great White Throne?
A voice is crying to the sky
Down in the depth alone;
A voice is crying, and its cry
Severs my flesh and bone.

"All for her sake I left her side
And turned my soul to heaven,
That in the stream of mercy wide
The glory of her body's pride
And love might be forgiven.

"I long for her to die, and pray
God's love to bring her home;
I think that she has died to-day,
And still she does not come.

"All for her sake I left her there,
And if 'tis all in vain,
Hurl me down headlong through the air
To be with her again.

"I cried unto the Lord to save
Her radiant soul from hell.
The world itself almost forgave
The love that warmed it well.

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"The suffering world was soothed with love
Of all her tender grace;
Is there no mercy here above
For that so rapturous face?

"Hers was a winning voice, O Lord,
As any raised in prayer,
It could caress you with a word,
Like a hand upon your hair.

"Oh, for that voice I've waited long,
And now I hear it cry!"
"Nay, list," said Peter, "to the song
Of angel minstrelsy!

"Of wisdom sing the seraphim,
Of love the cherubs sing.
Good lack! What craze has come to him?
He peers into the chaos dim,
As though he would take wing!"

"It is her voice that cries from far!
I see her stand alone,
White as the rain-washed morning star,
Where cruel things enthronéd are
Around a cruel throne.

"'O Satan, hear one prayer,' she cries,
'And I will do thy will!
The soul is fair though the body dies,
And I am fairest still.

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"'I have no fear, I seek no grace,
I care not for their heaven;
I only pray to see his face
Once and no more within the place
Of such as are forgiven;

"'Forgiven that he left our sin
Before our day was done,
And turned to God with prayers to win
Some home for us to shelter in
Beyond the moon and sun;

"'Together, as on many a day
Above the city wide,
When heart to heart alone we lay,
And far below the world did go
Adream upon a tide.

"'I only pray to feel again
Dear love enfolding me
One little moment, ere we twain
Disjoined for ever be.

"'I only pray—What hand is there?
What mouth so poisons mine?
Dear love, he rends my body bare,
He drags my face back by the hair,
This amorous face of thine!

"'The snakes of hell clasp me afresh!
O thou whom I adore,
This is love's consecrated flesh
That devils hunger for!

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"'Oh, not for them I held it fair!
Oh, keep them from my side,
Beloved!'" And at love's own prayer
The gates of God flew wide.

Down from the edge of heaven there fell
A line of burning light;
Down in the lowest depth of hell
A damnéd soul stood white.

With arms entwined in the dear art
They had on earth begun,
They rushed together heart to heart,
As when two flames that burn apart
Meet, and are only one.

Their joy was joy to all the dead,
And filled the silent heaven;
And Jesus to the Virgin said,
"In hell they lie forgiven."

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IX

VÆ VICTIS

IT was one of the happiest evenings in our lives, for after a year's campaigning we were ordered home. The orders had reached us in Pretoria, and a terrible journey we had made of it so far—riding our starved horses through stinging hail and blue lightning over the high veldt to Johannesburg; stuck up there for days and nights because the train would not start for fear of De Wet; then crawling slowly down the line, feeling at every bridge lest it should plunge us into death; camping out all night by Viljoen's Drift, with nothing to eat but the plunder of an old Scotchwoman's store of onions and tinned milk; brought up sharp next day by a patrol, who told us the train in front had been wrecked and we must wait, just in the centre of nothingness, till the sappers had cleared the line. Then at last we had crept into Kroonstad and jolted on through

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another night and day to Bloemfontein. There our troubles had ended, and we four had secured a carriage in a corridor train that was thought sure to get through to the Cape. We had shelves to let down as beds, and a smug little conductor in uniform to be tipped. It would still take us two days and nights to reach Cape Town, but what did that matter? The line was clear, and we were going home. So the war-correspondent sang, "You'll have to marry me now," the artist threw the baggage about for joy, the invalided "Death-or-Glory Boy" smoked our cigarettes to show he had no nasty pride, and I kept ringing for the conductor. His pasty face, his flabby form, his expectant servility, filled me with delight; for they were the assurance that civilisation was not far off.

As we kept on telling each other, we were "fair fed up" with campaigning life. "No more corrugated iron!" "No more barbed wire!" "No more horse and water!" "No more cantering Colonials!" "No more Loyalists on the make!" we cried in turn.

"Never again shall I sleep in a puddle with a family of enteric germs using my mouth as a shelter from the cold!" "Never again will my

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mare chew a horse's tail for hunger, while another devours her mane!" "Never again shall I lie rubbing my nose in the sand, afraid to wipe it for fear of the bullets!" "Never again shall I ask a lord to dinner and give him half a teaspoonful of sugar for a treat!"

"Think of whisky and soda, bucketsful, with ice!" "Think of seven meals a day on board!" "Think of getting into a bed with sheets!" "Think of seeing a woman again!"

"Well, I saw some at Durban about six months ago, after the siege, and they seemed to me irrelevant, as the girl said of reading."

"Poor old boy! How you must have suffered in that siege! You didn't think Mrs. What-was-her-name irrelevant on the ship coming out!"

"You mean that woman with the scent-bottles? Yes, I remember. I used to break one wherever I sat down."

"Yes, and poor old Price worshipped her down to the heels of her open-work stockings. Good thing for him he got shot, after all."

"Only hope there's a lot like her on the ship going back. None of your long-range women for me!"

"No, not like those Boer girls at Pretoria,

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stuck over with the Transvaal colours like Christmas trees."

"Curse them all! How superbly they detest us!"

"I can't for the life of me see why—the women, I mean."

"It does seem against nature, doesn't it? You'd think we ought to be a pleasant change after those hairy Boers. Never mind, we'll have it all our own way at home."

"Won't we do ourselves proud! Buck too, buck like Hades!"

We all laughed again, and the correspondent began driving his joy into the artist's head with the butt end of his revolver.

"Safe to take off your putties and breeches to-night," said the "Death-or-Glory Boy," as I climbed up to my shelf above his head, and wrapt myself round with a plaid and a kaross of jackal skins. Outside it was freezing hard, and I watched the waning moon moving up from the bare horizon of the veldt among the unknown African stars. The world seemed full of glorious light, for I was going home, and thought only of the welcome that awaited me. Taking some letters stained and worn from my pocket, I read them through

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till I came to one which I could read without the light. So, drawing the green shade across the lamp, I pulled the end of the plaid well over my head, and fell softly down and lower down into the bottomless sleep, while the train went rumbling on the immense plateau towards the sea and home.

It must have been some hours later that the engine drew up suddenly at a wayside station, and the shriek of the brake against the wheels called me up from the depth of sleep. Into it I should have fallen again, listening to the unequalled silence of a train that has stopped, had not a girlish voice suddenly cried out at the opposite window—

"Where is de Boer prisoner? Where is de wounded Boer?"

She spoke in that distinct and childlike staccato with which most Boer women speak English. At the same time I heard fingers tapping at the window-pane. Then came the tread of the flabby conductor along the corridor.

"There ain't no bloomin' Boer here," he began, "so you can just clear."

"What's that?" shouted the correspondent, throwing off his rug. "There is a Boer here! There's that wounded prisoner on that shelf!"

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"So there is. I quite forgot," said the conductor, entering at once into the joke. "Be quick round by the door, my girl, and you can have a look."

Too sleepy to think, I listened dreamily, and next moment I felt the girl enter the carriage, bringing the frosty air in her clothes. Then I felt her fingers quickly—but, oh, so gently!—disentangle the dark plaid over my head and draw it down. Turning round, I looked at her. She had put her feet on the berth below, and in the dim light was peering into my face quite close. The ordinary type of Dutch girlhood, broad of feature and strong of bone, her mass of straw-coloured hair not to be hidden even under the enormous construction of her sun-bonnet, a marvel of washing and starch. But at the moment I only saw the wide grey eyes so near to mine.

In them lived the passion of unsure and uncertain hope that dare not trust its joy; the passion of pity, and of an affection too entire for reserves. It was a look with which at the resurrection a lover's soul, careless of its proper grave, might watch for the beloved's body as it formed again from dust. It endured but for one

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of those crowded seconds which last indefinitely, and then one by one I saw them die—the affection first, the pity next, and last of all the hope, so much the last that it seemed to have grown old with lingering. Then indifference came, and hatred, and the cold darkness which is not living despair, but only the death of hope. The fingers still clung to my plaid, but one by one they moved, so that they might not touch my neck.

"I'm very sorry, but there's no Boer here," I said.

"Oh, dam! oh, dam!" she cried in her quick staccato, slid down to the carriage floor, and was gone. Along the corridor I heard her voice: "Where is de Boer prisoner? Where is de wounded Boer?"

The engine whistled. "Come, clear off," shouted the flabby conductor, "or I'll have to heave you out."

"Oh, hell!" said the gentle little voice from a distance, and the train moved on.

We all laughed. "That's a good joke," said the correspondent. "I say, old man, she took you for one of your hairy Boers. Oh, dam! Oh, hell!"

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He imitated the girl's voice exactly, and we laughed again.

"That's the language they catch from the cultured Colonial."

"Not a bad-looking girl either. I wish she was coming on the ship."

"Oh, we'll do better than that. Chuck me a cigarette, somebody. I can't sleep a curse."

I let down my window and looked back along the line. The little station was already far away, but on the platform I could see the figure of the girl in the great white sun-bonnet, standing immovable. Then the solitary porter turned out the single station lamp, and she disappeared. The waning moon was now far up the sky. Not a house or sign of farm was anywhere to be seen. All around us stretched the desolate veldt, and a few low kopjes of barren rock rose far in front. They were the beginning of the great Karoo desert, and I remembered again that I was going home.

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AT SEA

Now the wild-eyed Northern Star
Dances on the horizon's bar,
Dances, rises, vanishes,
And we break the southern seas.

Nameless constellations stand
White above a nameless land;
London—London lies to-night
Set with constellations white.

Murmuring to the swinging tides,
To and fro her river slides;
Down the streams of square and street
Murmuring go the human feet.

Drunk with life the city reels,
Joy is borne on burning wheels,
Lovers come and lovers part,
Lovers waken heart on heart.

Like a flame of lonely fire
Stands the star of my desire,
Longing as I long, she stands,
Empty are her amorous hands.

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Both her hands uncomforted
She would lay around my head,
She would give her being whole,
She would give me all her soul.

While the planets go their way,
She would hold me close till day,
Close to her heart she would hold me—
And I sail a southern sea,

And the wild-eyed Northern Star
Dances on the horizon's bar;
Lanterns at the masthead high
Swing across an unhallowed sky.

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X

OF YOUR CHARITY

EVER since the siege Michael Roby had felt like Lazarus when he struggled back from his cerements into life again. Worn thin by starvation and fever, he had become strangely perceptive; a double significance lurked in every sight; when people spoke to him he saw their real thoughts visibly seated in their eyes, and the ghosts would not lie still in the crowded cemetery of his mind.

When he returned from hospital to the once familiar town, he found that everything was changed. The station-yard was blocked with waggons full of supplies, among which Kaffirs yelled and cracked their streaming lashes. Unknown soldiers tramped up and down, unknown officers galloped to and fro. These were not the people who belonged to the place. He had come back like the dead to a generation of strangers.

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The horse, which whinnied at the sound of his voice, and strove to bear him gallantly down the road, was still shrunken with past hunger, and the other horses sniffed uneasily when they saw him, as a parvenu sniffs at the apparition of a poor relation. To Michael the careless crowd was like the purchasers at the sale of an ancestral mansion full of memories. Ignorant of meanings and values they passed by this and that. The pit in the middle of the road round which they guided the teams—what did they know of the orange flash, the column of smoke, and the whirling fragments when all faces grew rigid as the first shell burst among the peaceful houses? The shop-front with the ruined window—what did they know of the Kaffir's blood that splashed that wall with purple as the man fell in bits before Michael's feet one early morning before breakfast. The shattered flagstone in front of the bakery—what did they know of the mule-team waiting there when a shell came and the four surviving mules threw up their heads and shrieked like women? What did they know of the things that had happened in the little chapel, or the causes of the sickening smells at certain spots, or the best paths for avoiding them? Michael felt a

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growing hostility against the easy-going intruders upon these fading tragedies.

"How bitterly the dead must hate the living," he thought to himself, "if it is ever their punishment to return!"

As he crossed the river by the bridge, the horse pulled hard to the right and refused to go on. "Nice old thing," said Michael, "he thinks I must surely want to inquire after poor Bourchier; but he was buried long ago."

He cantered up the road towards a ridge on the line of defences, and again the horse turned as a matter of course down a little path which the soldiers had once marked out with whitewashed stones.

"How custom breeds a habit in a horse!" said Michael. "Can't you see, the little tents are all gone now? Those are the circles where once they stood. But from all the bare ground comes no Irish voice to cheer us."

From the ridge, where the forts of heaped-up stones remained untouched, the open veldt stretched away to a higher crest, once held by the enemy's guns. Turning to the left along a shallow watercourse—just enough cover from the shells in old days—he reached the steep path

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which the sailors had made, and at the foot he was almost surprised not to see the long row of contorted forms—so angular and unnatural—which had lain there one Sunday morning under the thorns. There was nothing now but grass and stones, and the top of the hill was quiet too. On every side the mountains stood silent in the sunshine, except that above the furthest precipices of the great mountain range a storm was gathering in masses of sullen cloud, and already the quick lightning was beginning to flicker like the soft tongues of serpents.

He was leading his horse along the rough summit towards the empty gun emplacements, when suddenly the creature stopped short with a sharp jerk at the bridle, and stood trembling at some object before him, while he breathed hard down his nostrils.

"Silly old fool!" said Michael. "Haven't you ever seen an old hat before?"

He turned it over with his foot. There was a little hole on one side of it, and a large hole on the other. The inside was stained dark brown.

> "Oh, why did I leave my little back room,
> In Ber-mond-sey?"

sang a soldier's voice close by.

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Michael's breath stopped, and he looked quickly round. Wherever he looked he saw a brown figure disappearing among the stones and scrubby aloes, and strange voices called in his ears.

"You're charging wrong way, my man," they said. "I'm going up again." "He's down." "He was my brother." "Oh, look at my poor blood running out!" "They've done me, blast them!"

"This won't do," said Michael, turning up his collar, for the storm was whirling up from the west, and heavy drops began to fall. "It was just here we stood at the end of the day. But this won't do. I'm not that sort of man."

He dragged the horse away, and walked quickly by the little track along the top of the broad ridge. He passed a few low walls rudely piled up for cover, and two of the main sangars, all purposeless now. He kept talking to the horse as he went, but those brown figures were always rising and looking at him from behind the rocks, and whenever he turned and faced them full they disappeared. As he came up to the third sangar, he was relieved to see straight in front of him a man who did not vanish. He



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was seated on a large, flat stone a few yards from the entrance, and the red tabs on his collar showed him to be a staff officer. Going nearer, Michael shouted, "Good afternoon!" through the increasing storm.

The officer raised his eyes.

"Where is the regiment?" he asked.

"They have often asked where *you* were," said Michael, for he knew that the man had thrown up his commission long before in some hot-blooded outburst of rage.

"Wherever they are, they will have heard of my death by now," the other went on. "It was not a bad death. When they talk of it at mess, they will say, 'Do you remember that time he got the goal against the Nineteenth?' And for a week they will think of me when they go to polo. It was not a bad death."

"The wrong people die; that is the worst of life," said Michael.

"Through my glasses," said the other, "I watched that Dutchman settle down to his aim. He rested his rifle on a big stone to steady it. A big, bearded poacher of a man he was, very indifferently dressed. I saw the spurt of flame in the morning twilight. The mountains leapt

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into the sky, and for a moment my head felt rather comfortably warm."

"Probably he said, 'Got him that time.' And it was you he had killed. How many half-hearted and greedy people we could have spared rather than you. The wrong people die."

"Would you have had me grow fat and foul in clubs and country houses, till I slimed away in the funeral of an elderly gentleman, who had been in the army once? It's true I did want to see those elephants far away over there in the Portuguese forests. I have grubbed for gold in Alaska, and stood upon the unnamed heights above the sources of the Amazon. I have ridden with cowboys on the plains, and learnt to throw the bolas beside the Rio Grande. I have lurked all night in the Hooghli swamps to watch the tigers drink. On the Mongolian deserts my shaggy camels died of cold. But I wanted to see those elephants in the forest; and women liked to have me with them. Perhaps it was a little hard that I should have to die."

"Hard for us all," said Michael.

"I wonder what they thought in the old grey house when the boy ran across the park with a telegram from the War Office."

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"There is a portrait of you there in purple velvet, with long, fair curls and a big lace collar," said Michael. "I saw it once."

"Queer, isn't it?" said the other. "But it wasn't a bad kind of death, only I do wish I could have seen those elephants first. If you meet that hairy poacher, give him my kind regards, and tell him how much I admired the shot that bagged me. Good-bye; remember me to the regiment."

He strode proudly away as one who disdains cover, and left the cold rock empty and indistinguishable.

Michael's horse, with his bridle tied to the left stirrup, was grazing at ease upon the long grass, which had so lately been out of reach even to the starving cavalry, and as he stood munching he looked round upon the scene with a contemplative air. The storm had swept round to the north, and lay over Jonono in purple masses split by innumerable shafts of lightning, while the great cumulus clouds above it lumbered slowly onward, the white of their summits blending at the base into reddish brown. But in the west the sky was delicately clearing, and in a golden mist the sun hung over the fairy peaks and massive barriers of a

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precipitous range already just flecked with snow. The unknown country must have looked just like that when the first explorer climbed that hill not more than a long lifetime before. And now man had done his worst, and the scene was left again to the sun and storm.

Encompassed by the dead, Michael led the horse to the end of the flat-topped hill and down the zigzag which soldiers had once made to their camp. He reached the thorns and the riverside, and was laughing at a vision of ghostly pipers practising their heroic skirls and screams in the river-bed, while above them phantom shells joined in their toneless music, when on the opposite bank he saw a white arm waving to him. The signal came from a hollow scooped in the bank, under a queer erection that looked like a little fort, and Michael remembered the burning afternoon when he had helped to pile that line of sandbags as a protection to the pit where they had nursed a friend in his fever. The sandbags still were there, neatly overlapping each other like bricks, but the pit was full of weeds and long saplings shooting from the yellow earth.

It was hard work to get the horse over the river there. He kept turning round, backing,

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and protesting more plainly than words that never, never in his life had he crossed the water there, and that the drift was a hundred yards further up. Struggling, plunging, and swimming in the deep holes, they reached the opposite shallows at last, and a quiet voice observed—

"You will find it much easier to cross the Styx, my impetuous friend."

"It was certainly terrible to see how easily you glided over it into the shades," said Michael. "We clutched at your life, but it was gone."

"Yes, it was a pity," he answered; "a sideways ending, as I told you at the time. Is it well with the Empire?"

And like the Shunammite woman when her child was dead, Michael answered, "It is well."

The other smiled, as his old way was, and said—

"You, at least, have not changed, you passionate lover and hater of our country. How often in hearing your denunciations I have remembered the lines:—

> 'Rejoice, O Florence, that thou art so great,
> Spreading thy pinions over land and sea,
> And bearest a name so far diffused in hell.'

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"And those others too :—

'I who had passed from human to divine,
And passed from time into eternity,
And passed from Florence to the just and sane.'

"I suppose I ought to speak those lines now with peculiar appropriateness. What brevity the old fellow had! But there is always something of the disappointed lover about him when he speaks of his country, and it is just the same with you. That is the worst of expecting a woman or a country to do what you wish of her."

"She is a nightmare," said Michael, "of unintentional crimes and uninteresting successes."

"The seas," he answered, "gulp and fall around her promontories, or lie brooding there in green and purple lines. Her mountains are low, like blue waves they run along the horizon, and the wind flies over them. It is a country of deep pasture and quiet downs and earthy fields, where the furrows run straight from hedge to hedge. There is moorland too, and lakes with wild names, and every village is full of ancient story. The houses are clustered round old castle walls, and across the breezy distance of fen and common the grey cathedrals rise, like ships in full sail."

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"And in the midst of those scenes," said Michael, "there dwells a race singularly unprepossessing, a people incapable either of sanctity or gaiety, hard-featured, unimpassioned, stunted and begrimed by poverty and smoke, stupefied by their work and stupid in their pleasure."

"I know all that," said he, laughing sadly. "But when I think of our country do you suppose I see an uninspired crowd, stumbling rough-shod and drunken over the world? Oh, no; I see a lady, lovable and majestic, bounteous in charity as in strength. At her girdle hang the keys of the oceans and the narrow seas. Into her hands are gathered the reins of the world, and her voice directs the course that mankind will take. Wherever danger is, her sons are found. War to them is a sport, and they think less of death than of the loss of a goal. Saying little about liberty, they possess freedom; and under the excuse of money-making they fling their lives away indifferently on the government of continents or the capture of a little pig."

"The poetic mind always sees itself," said Michael; "it is like the lover's mind, full of a vision as unreal as sweet."

"Not even death," said he, "can make a poet

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of my thin ghost; but as to a lover, was there ever a lover who loved less because the beloved sinned? Sorrow he may feel, or passionate shame, or murderous rage, but those are only moods of love, and without love are unknown. Put things at their lowest, and it was worth while for me to belong to a country like ours. You yourself would admit, no other country could have given me such a portrait to paint, so full of contrasts and opposing moods. I could have painted them all—the vulgarity, the snobbery, the hypocrisy, and the greed. But anyone can see all that, and, you know, it is only the difficult that counts in art. A lover does not sing to his mistress of all the defects so plainly visible to her women friends. It is his reward to see finer things than they. And so in our country I saw hidden things very difficult to discover—a flicker of generosity in spite of greed, a gleam of honour in the midst of vulgarity, and somewhere in the very depths of hypocrisy some little grain of faith. These were the things I painted in her portrait, being her lover, and caring only to paint what is so difficult to see, and my reward would have been to see her grow more and more like the picture I had drawn. For the

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meanest begins to straighten up when you call him the soul of chivalry, a girl will grow in beauty directly you call her beautiful, and certainly it would be the same with one's country."

"Then it would be easy," said Michael, "to build up heaven upon judicious compliments."

"Quite easy," he answered, "at least for a lover of our country, such as I was. But in the midst of my greatest opportunity I was cut off, in the midst of the finest and most difficult portrait, full of strange contrasts and of unexpected lights, glimmering through masses of shadow. It is bitter to leave a thing unfinished, though whenever the end came something unfinished must have been left."

"Most men die too late," said Michael, "and few know the exact moment when they ought to die out of decent respect for themselves."

"At all events," he said, "I was spared the pain of envying my own past."

"I remember," said Michael, "one day as we were crossing that barren flat over there, and you were wondering if this war was to be our country's Sicilian expedition, a shell burst somewhere near, and the nozzle seemed to pursue us like a living snake, leaving a thin spiral of smoke.

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'What if it had spread us like bone manure upon the sand,' you said, 'the Empire would have gone on just the same.' And now it goes on without you, but not the same."

"No, not the same," he answered, smiling; "that is both my sorrow and my reward. You did not think that afternoon that you were riding side by side with a ghost. It is really rather a pity. I should like to have gone home again, to have stood on the deck listening to the swirl of the water along the great steamer's side. There is music—steamer music, you know—in the distance. Women are talking in quiet voices, and laughing quietly; they move up and down with a quiet rustle of skirts. Five bells sounds, and I listen to the swirl of the water as wave after wave is crossed and left behind, like the pulses of time through which life passes and passes on."

"Nor is it a recompense for death," said Michael, "that the whole race mourned for you."

"For them," he answered cheerfully, "it is some recompense. At least, I suppose it is better to have something to mourn about than nothing. I only wish I had given them more worth the mourning. Nothing was done, nothing

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said. Before me lay the whole earth, with all its variegated surface of mountain and sea and desert, and the many-coloured cities of men. Close at my feet life glimmered like an interwoven tapestry of brilliant and subtle hues. It was mine to see, and I was possessed by the passion of vision, the indomitable desire 'to follow knowledge like a sinking star.' I had but to enter upon the wide domain which was my spirit's to conquer. Life!—it was so full of interest, so full of strange sympathies and gorgeous colours and vivid contradictions. 'Life piled on life were all too little' for the unquenchable passion of my eyes. Sorrow, hatred, envy, and all the wild troop of sins—these were but the relieving shadows that lay in clouds or flitted and danced over the glorious world. And it was mine to see it all. Fear and the commonplace were laid far behind me. Fame held me by the hand. Already I touched the golden bowl. Then some insignificant shred of skin gave way, some paltry bit of me which I did not even know to exist, and all was gone. Fame, joy, affection, the beautiful earth and the desire for wisdom, all were gone. "Then farewell for ever, horse, and love, and dancing!" as the gipsies sing. They

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slipped away in one second of a rainy and uninteresting afternoon. You may perhaps remember the occasion."

"Sorrow, and sorrow, and for the third time sorrow!" said Michael, so that the other smiled to hear that ancient lamentation for those who held the ferryman's farthing under their tongue. "That was not you I saw with wool upon your eyelids and a linen band across your mouth. That was not you whom we lowered at night with thin cords into a hole. That we all know was not you. But the quick spirit, so radiant with visible flame—how was it possible to realise that it had already been dispersed into nothingness, leaving only its fine habitation empty there? For one moment it seemed hardly strange that men should so often have imagined an immortal soul. It was so much easier to think of you setting out from star to star, or pacing up and down the perilous front of embattled spirits, as I have seen you pace on earth. But you were dissolved into our past, and from us you were gone, like him who came to Oxford and his friends no more."

"Is it not absurd," he answered, smiling still, "that a soul fit to grapple with the secrets of the

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universe should think itself highly favoured if in our whole life it can behold some ten-thousandth part of this tiny speck of dust we call the earth? But as to the soul's future, you know, it is impossible to say one thing or the other, since both are equally inconceivable. That is a saying I remember from the old wisdom of which I strove to make myself master among other things—so many other things, I am glad to say."

Michael looked round upon the empty pit. There in the sand were the four holes where the legs of the bed had stood; a few red tiles were scattered on the earth, and the dead leaves still hung on the boughs which he had laid across the top as a screen against the glare of the sky for eyes long sightless now.

Light was failing, and here and there an unknown star appeared. He turned up the stream towards the drift, but as he approached it his horse suddenly swerved and stood trembling all over, just as horses do when they mysteriously become aware of a quicksand under the surface. He moaned with terror, and stretching his head forward, kept moving it from side to side as though he was staring at something in front. Michael looked up and saw in the gathering

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dusk another man on horsback standing across their way. His horse was drinking, and the man, leaning backwards with his hands on the hindquarters, was repeating half in earnest and half in jest the lines :—

> "'The castle where I dwell, it stands
> A long way off from Christian lands,
> A long way off my lady's hands,
> A long way off the aspen trees
> And murmur of the lime-tree bees.'"

The horse stopped drinking and tried to walk on across the drift, but staggered pitifully as it went.

"Bear up, my horse," said the man, varying the words of Ulysses to his heart; "more dog-like things than this have we endured. What, you poor empty digesting-sack upon four legs! Would you choose to be anywhere else in the planetary system, champing golden corn through an immortality of satiety, rather than here?

> "'But down the Valley of the Rose
> My lady often hawking goes,
> Heavy of cheer; oft turns behind,
> Leaning toward the western wind,
> Because . . .'"

He gathered his bridle tight, and still murmuring the lines, passed over the water.

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Then Michael remembered that there are ghosts of the living as well as of the dead. They haunt the places where the living have been before, and may often be seen, especially by themselves in after-time. As a rule they appear to be happier than they were in life, but still we feel great pity for them, as for people unconsciously approaching the ambuscades of sorrow.

So he watched his former self creep up the opposite bank upon his horse's starving ghost, and then, repeating those Homeric words, "Endure, my soul! more doglike things hast thou endured," he left the stream and turned up a deserted little pathway between the hills, so as to avoid the block of waggons and troops in the main street. But indeed he found the old cavalry lines and other camps so crowded with familiar spirits that the other way would have been quicker after all, and when he reached the top of the path it was with relief as well as regret, like the relief of one who escapes into solitude even from the most delightful society.

A crimson light still hung in the sky, and all the well-known hills and ridges lay transfigured in purple robes. Again he felt the sweet air blowing over the grass, and above the low thorns

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in the distance the big red moon was rising up. Scattered far and wide on every bit of plain or gentle slope, bright points of flame gleamed in gold and vermilion, while above them stood thin columns of grey mist, like living breath. They were the camp-fires of the living, securely making ready for another night's supper and sleep. For the world's great army was marching forward upon the graves of the past, and had but little time to consider how pitifully sacred was the soil over which it trampled.

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"AFFATIM EDI, BIBI, LUSI"

I DO not greatly care what may befall
  My soul when it shall fade in air ;
Whether it live, or live no more at all,
    I do not care.

Poor, pallid, gentle, wandering, bloodless thing,
  That shivers naked out of sight !
A moth, a lonely seabird on the wing
    Has more delight.

But for my body, what shall come of it—
  Dear host and comrade of the soul—
I do deplore the destiny unfit,
    That graveyard hole.

Oh, the broad chest that broke the swollen wave,
  The feet that were so swift to run,
The eyes that threw a light so glad and brave
    Back to the sun.

The limbs that learnt of love his utmost worth,
  And burning heart that loved so true !
Sweet Earth, have pity on a little earth
    That pitied you.

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XI

IZWA!

"LISTEN, and I will tell you," said the big, bearded Inchuerba, the Induna of his tribe, and as he spoke he threw back the leopard skin from his shoulder, and planted the butt end of his spear firmly on the earth. Its broad, flat blade gleamed in the sun under which all Zululand lay panting, and in the misty haze far away, beyond the crinkled surface of hill and valley, a thin line of the sea shone like melted copper.

"Listen, and I will tell you; for you are the greatest of witch-doctors, and can hear the footstep of the rain before it comes, and the words of a man's thoughts, though far away. Therefore you will track out the wild beast that is eating up my joy."

"Izwa, izwa! Track him out, track him out!" murmured the men and women of the tribe, sitting around in a dark circle; for they knew why they had been summoned from all the neighbour-

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ing kraals, and now they were gathered about their Induna in a ring, and from their black and polished skins the sun was reflected in streaks and curves of light.

"Listen," said the chief, and in front of him the witch-doctor stood silent with closed eyes. On his head was a pair of buffalo horns, polished till they shone like jet, and round his neck hung a circlet of the horns of little antelopes. On his chest were bunches of dark feathers, and into his girdle of wild-cat skins he had stuck thin knives and javelins shaped like claws and teeth. There he stood silent with closed eyes, for he had blinded himself long ago that he might hear the better, and behold things far away and the spirits that creep invisible.

"I have sent for you from your home in the mountains," said the Induna, "for the sake of a great chief's daughter, who is my latest and youngest wife. It was in Tongaland I found her, where men are not tall warriors like us, but women are beautiful as little spirits walking the earth, and in her father's kraal she was called Gonizolo, 'the same as yesterday,' because while still so young—so young—she was perfect in form, and never grew bigger or changed from

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day to day. Not much more than a year has passed since I married her, giving two whole spans of oxen for her purchase, because her father is a great chief, and she belongs to the royal blood, although her people are not conquerors of men like us. In four sets of eight apiece I paid the oxen—two full spans there were in all, and not a fault to be found in any of them. They have not died of the sickness nor have their tongues turned blue, but all in perfect strength they drag the great chief's waggons. He on his side has four times eight fine oxen, but I have only a girl that withers away. She bears me no child, she gives me no joy. All day long she lies at the door of the hut, refusing food and saying no word. What profit then have my oxen brought me? Two full span there were, the very pick of my herds. It needs must be that someone wishes evil against her, for how else could she be sick, seeing that she is very young? The old die and it is right, but how should the young die unless an evil spirit destroys them? Someone has wrought witchcraft upon her that she may die and be lost to me—lost like the oxen which were mine only a year ago, and now are gone from me. For this cause

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I have sent for you, that you may track down the guilty one, and he may die. Five of my oxen—five more of the very best—I will give you the hour that you track him down and this spear runs through his heart. For Gonizolo is young as a snake in spring; why then should she die and be no profit to me any more, though she cost so much to win?"

"Izwa, izwa!" cried the dark circle of the tribe sitting around their chief, and they clapped their hands softly together as encouragement to the witch-doctor's skill.

Lying on an antelope's hide in her place among the Induna's wives, Gonizolo raised her hands like the rest, and struck her pinkish palms together, making her rows of brass bracelets jingle like little bells. "Izwa, izwa!" she cried like the rest. "Let the great witch-doctor track down the guilty one and slay the evil spirit that is sucking at my heart!"

The witch-doctor now stood alone in the midst of the circle, and all who sat round could see his form dark and clear against the sky. For a long time he made no movement, but stood with hands hanging down and head bent forward, as though listening for something very far off.

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Then his body began to sway to and fro, and from his lips came disjointed words almost inaudible—

"My father's father the snake! It is the ancient snake. I hear him rustling in the grass, very far away. He is coming at my call. Swift as the assegai of thought he moves. The air hisses round his flight, and no man can see him. It is my father's father the snake. In his eyes burns the desire for blood."

At the word blood all the people drew in their breath with satisfaction, and Gonizolo, lying in her place, laughed softly for joy, because the blood would deliver her from the spell of sorcery. But all were silent, and eagerly watched the witch-doctor as he began to sway more and more rapidly to and fro, and then to turn slowly round, stamping his foot hard upon the earth at every turn, and uttering strange and isolated words, meaningless except to the spirits and deadly animals, whose names they chiefly were. For a long time the monotonous dance went on without a pause, and by degrees the people began to mark the stamp of the witch-doctor's foot by beating their hands against their naked thighs. By degrees a monotonous chant arose, following

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the cadence of the dance, and repeating the words for lightning, sun, and fire in rapid succession. Evening was coming on, and the lower lands outstretched around the hill were turning purple in sunset, but still the dance went on, and the people raised the low chant of lightning, sun, and fire.

Suddenly the witch-doctor threw up both arms high above his head with upturned hands. Again he seemed to be listening intently, and his sightless eyes, wide open now, were fixed on the depths of air above him.

Far away, as though coming from another world, was heard the low mutter of thunder.

The people shivered, and sighed audibly, knowing that their call was heard.

The witch-doctor waited till the last sound of the thunder was gone, and turning, with arms still outstretched, to the points of the compass in succession, he cried—

"I see the north; a spirit goes by upon the lightning. Let him tell me if the guilty one is there!"

"Izwa, izwa!" murmured the people, smiting their hands gently together.

"I see the south," cried the witch-doctor.

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"A spirit goes by upon the lightning. Let him tell me if the guilty one is there!"

"Izwa, izwa!" murmured the people, smiting their hands gently together.

"I see the east," cried the witch-doctor, "and there the sun burns in a palace of gold. Let him tell me if the guilty one is there!"

And again the people murmured, "Izwa, izwa!" and gently clapped their hands.

"I see the west, and there the moon dwells in a palace of silver. Let her tell me if the guilty one is there!"

And again the people murmured, "Izwa, izwa!" and gently clapped their hands.

There was a long silence and the witch-doctor continued to gaze into the sky with upturned palms. At last his lips moved, and he said—

"I have called to the north and south; I have called to the east and west. But there is no answer to be found in any of them, for they have not beheld the guilty one, nor is he there."

A murmur, not of despair, but of renewed assurance, ran through the people. They glanced at each other furtively; they nodded their heads, and all drew more closely together, like those to whom the real point of interest is now coming

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near. Only Gonizolo was sad, and with a weary moan she hid her face in her hands for fear lest the search for her enemy should fail.

But the witch-doctor spoke again: "I see the centre of the sky. Far away in the blue an invisible eagle is flying straight down upon us like a falling stone. He brings news of what his eyes have seen."

"Izwa, izwa!" shouted the people, clapping their hands eagerly as though to hound the seer on, while with outstretched necks they began unconsciously to creep in upon the open circle round his feet.

Suddenly he dropped his arms, and holding both hands to his head, he was seen to reel as though something from an immense height had fallen into his brain.

"The guilty one is among us," he said: "he is sitting in the circle now. I smell the guilt of his soul."

A shout of wild joy and vengeance went up from all the people. Men sprang to their feet, brandishing clubs and long javelins in both hands. The dark arms of women were outstretched as though to grasp the justice of heaven. They shrieked to each other with

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hungry delight, and the whole air was full of clamour.

"Izwa, izwa!" they cried, and their voices had the note of dogs close upon a trail of blood.

But the witch-doctor had fallen silent again, and stood dumb and stiff as in a trance. One by one the voices died away, and all was still but for the quick breathing of the people panting with excitement.

The burning sun went down behind the distant mountains of Natal, and the magician's form stood out dark and motionless against the evening sky. Gonizolo raised herself again from the ground to look at him. On his skill depended life or death for her, and the longing for life was strong in her eyes. If his power should fail him now, she would waste and waste till no more life was left. She looked at the big Zulu woman beside her, and then at her own delicate hands and slender form. How easily life would slip out of such a body as hers and be found no more. In terror she struck her little hands together again, and amid the silence of the people rose her piteous little cry of "Izwa, izwa! Track him out! Oh, track him out!"

The sound of that plaintive voice and its lonely

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petition broke the spell of the people's silence and roused them to new fury. Shouting to each other and wildly gesticulating, they stretched their long black arms to one part of the circle, and in the gathering twilight their gleaming eyes were turned to one spot like points of white ivory.

The witch-doctor lifted a bare and skinny arm straight above his head, and waited till the shouting was hushed. With one swift stroke he dropt his arm like a sword of judgment, and pointed to the same part of the circle as the rest.

"He is there!" he cried. "He is there—below the southern star!"

As the hand fell the ring was broken. To one side and the other the people ran for very life, falling down and leaping over each other as they rushed away. In a moment a broad gap was left, like the empty space in the heel of a horseshoe.

But in the middle of the gap a man lay crouching. His arms were locked round his knees, and between his thighs his face was hidden. He moved no more than the dead.

With one great shout of rage and triumph the crowd saw him cowering there like a hunted beast driven from cover.

"There he is! There he is!" they cried.

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"Strike him down. Strike him down. Spread his life upon the earth!"

Gonizolo stood up with the rest that she might see the man whom all were staring at. She smiled for eagerness and joy, for her heart was brimming over with hope and longing for life.

There he was—a darker patch upon the darkening ground. She could distinguish no more, but there he was—her murderer, the man who had called up an evil spirit to devour her life. There he was, and now he would soon be dead. The assegais would plunge into his body, and at once she would be well again. With a little sigh of escape she whispered, "Who is it? Who is it?" and lay down again upon her mat.

"Kill him! kill him!" the cries went on. "It is Manana, Mahasha's son. Kill him! kill him! We knew who it was. Manana, Manana! He called up the evil spirit. Kill him! kill him! Make haste! We knew he was the guilty one."

"Manana, Mahasha's son," cried the priest, "I have tracked out your sin. Confess, that you may die with justice."

But the man remained crouching in his place, and took no notice of the summons.

"Stand up, Manana," said the witch-doctor

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again, "and confess the sin, so that you may die with justice."

But the man moved no more than the dead move.

"Stand up, Manana," said the witch-doctor again, "and confess the sin, so that you may die, and the evil spirit may depart from Gonizolo, the Induna's young wife."

Then the man stood erect, facing the people. He was of the warrior tribe, and his hair was straight and silky, like long velvet pile. His mouth was thin and straight, and his skin deep black, except where it shone in the evening light. In one hand he grasped two javelins, but he stood motionless, with eyes fixed only on the Induna, who was rubbing his broad spear-head clean with the inside of his leopard skin. Around in the wide horseshoe the people stood glaring in silence, except when here and there arose the impatient cry for blood.

"It is true," he said; "I did it. I am Manana, Mahasha's son. It was I who brought an evil spirit upon Gonizolo, the Induna's young wife. So kill me, and the spirit will depart."

"Kill him! kill him!" yelled the people, and many sprang forward to strike him down with their spears.

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"Strike," he cried, "for I brought the evil spirit upon her. Since Gonizolo came from Tongaland, what life have I had? Could I endure the hour when I had not seen her? When did I go hunting? When did I wander into the swamps and mountains any more? Did I not lurk all day, and day after day, in rocks and bushes where I could see her come from the kraal? Did I not count her steps to the mealie fields, and only long that she would touch me with her feet as she touched the earth? All night I lay in the mealie fields, for how could I sleep or endure the hours of the night? All this you know; all this you have long known, for I took no care to hide my desire, seeing that it devoured my life. And because of the greatness of my desire the evil spirit came, for day and night without ceasing I burned to look upon her and be close to her side. And so at last the evil spirit came and fell upon her, as he falls upon all who are too much desired. Kill me now, and make no delay, for I have brought sorrow, and when I die the evil spirit will depart."

"Kill him! kill him!" shouted the people. "He has confessed."

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"It is for me to strike first," said the Induna, as they began crowding in upon the open space with their javelins, "for mine has been the loss."

So he went forward with his heavy lance truly poised, and the eyes of all the people grew large with expectation.

"No," said the witch-doctor, catching at his leopard skin, "let Gonizolo give the first blow. Only if she spills his blood herself will the evil spirit leave her."

"Gonizolo," cried the chief, turning round to where the women stood, "take the lance, that your own hand may draw the blood."

"Gonizolo, Gonizolo!" shouted the people; "strike the first blow! Make haste, make haste!"

And impatient of the delay, they all turned to where she was lying with her face hidden in her hands. At the sound of her name she rose and came out into the open space. She looked no more than a girl, so slight and young. Her skin was flushed with purple like deep black grapes, and about her thin little form the heavy rings of blue beads and white shone brilliantly in contrast. The brass circlets on her wrists and ankles just sounded as she moved, and a sigh of expectant pleasure went round the gazing crowd to think

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that a thing so small and weak should strike blood from a strong man's heart.

With eyes fixed on the earth she moved swiftly up to where the Induna was waiting beside the witch-doctor, and took from his hand the broad-bladed assegai, on which the rising full moon cast a gleam of light. Between the two men she went forward towards the place where Manana was, and as she came near he let his javelins drop and stood defenceless before her.

"Go forward and strike," said the Induna; "strike just below his left breast. It is enough if you make his blood run out."

But Gonizolo stood still a moment and did not raise her eyes from the ground.

"Strike, strike!" yelled the people, pressing in closer from behind. "Strike and let us see his blood."

"Strike at his heart," said the Induna. "Then you will be well again, and I shall not lose the price I gave to your father."

"Strike, strike!" yelled the crowd. "Give us his blood to drink!"

So Gonizolo grasped the lance firmly again in her little hand, and went forward alone to where Manana stood waiting for his death. And as

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she went she raised her eyes to look at him, and he met her look with his, knowing that now he saw her for the last time.

Step by step she drew nearer, and the whole people became silent, but for their audible gasps of expectation, as they craned forward to see the deed.

But when she had come so close that the blade of the spear almost touched him, Manana said to her, "Strike hard and make an end. Strike deep into my heart. I brought the evil spirits upon you, and when I am dead they will go away."

"I know," she answered, "I know."

Gripping the shaft tighter, with a quick movement she swung the heavy spear back over her shoulder, and drove it straight forward into his bare breast. For a moment it shook there and he fell. For a moment she stood shaking like the spear; then she fell as he had fallen, drew herself against his side, shivered, and was still. His heart's blood reddened her little brown hand as it clutched at the blade of the spear.

The people were silent for a moment, and then with loud cries they crowded in upon the place, over which the Induna and the blind magician were already stooping.

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"Stand back, stand back," said the chief, stretching out his arms with a laugh of exultation. "Was it not well done? Could a man have done it better? What man among us could have done it better?"

He knelt down, and putting his hand upon Gonizolo's neck called to her to get up, but she did not stir.

"She is weak," he said; "the evil spirits have sucked her blood, and now have left her almost without life. She was always small and weak, but what other woman could have done so well?"

He put his left arm around her, and staying himself on the spear which stood upright in the man's body he lifted her up.

"She is weak," he said, "but the evil spirits have gone. She will soon be well. Gonizolo, the spirits have gone. Wake and come away."

But she fell down again upon the dead.

Then the crowd, pressing eagerly round the place, began to whisper to each other that she was dead, and the women broke out into cries and wailing, and all the people stood round in amazement, looking at the bodies as they lay side by side.

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But at last the blind witch-doctor drew his blanket round him and said to the Induna, "Pay me the oxen, that I may go."

And without looking up the Induna answered, "Give him the five best oxen, for he tracked out the guilty."

And far into the night the people remained upon the hilltop bewailing the Induna's young wife, whom the strange spirits that haunt the soul had killed at the last moment as they were being driven out. Some of the men dug a deep pit close beside the place, and they lowered the two bodies into it, standing upright on their feet as befits a man and woman of the royal blood, and they filled up the pit with earth, and piled a great heap of stones on the top.

But when the moon had reached the middle of the sky, the people went home to sleep, and the dead remained alone together. And silent among the rest, the Induna also went home to his kraal and lay down in his central hut, with five wives in their separate huts on one hand, and four on the other.

"It is not only the oxen. Oh, it is not only the oxen!" he groaned, as he turned upon his leopard skin and tried in vain to sleep.

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THE DEMONIAC

He knew a devil lurked within,
Like a shy rat it gnawed his heart,
Behind his breast's partition thin
It roamed at will from part to part;
But how to coax the devil out
  Defied the village art.

They pounded spiders up with toads
And mixed them in his special bread,
They pricked him down the street with goads,
And rolled him in the nettle bed;
But at the last they all agreed
  He'd ne'er be cured till dead.

He stared upon the unpitying sky,
And slunk about the lonely ways,
Striving to hide from every eye
The torment of his haunted face;
He knew himself a creature loathed
  By all the human race.

He knew the sentence of his soul,
From wrack to wrack condemned to go,
Down an abyss he felt it roll
Of smoke and indistinguished woe;
"What have I done," he asked the winds,
  "To be confounded so?"

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Each morning, like a poisoned wine,
He drank the memory of his doom;
All day in horror's shadowy mine
He dug the galleries of gloom,
And watched a shapeless thing of dread
Ever before him loom.

It was my lady Rosalie
Came passing up the village street,
The sun of passion's charity
Shone on her mouth and eyelids sweet;
She was herself a bounteous sun
From her eyes down to her feet.

He caught the border of her dress,
And clinging to her knees did kneel,
He felt her fingers' tenderness
About his maddened forehead steal,
And the devil came sliding out of his mouth
As easily as an eel.

Methinks my lady Rosalie
Is of herself the dull earth's leaven;
Methinks there keeps her company
Some pure and healing air from heaven:
One devil from the clown she cast,
And from her lover, seven.

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XII

A LITTLE HONEY

"I did but taste a little honey."—1 SAM. xiv. 43.

"THERE you are, my heart! I hoped you'd be lookin' out for me," said the postman, pushing open the little white-barred gate, and crunching over the sea-shingle that made a path up Cecily's trim little garden.

"And who told you to be hopin' for anythin' at all," said Cecily's rosy maid, coming shyly down the path to meet him, and with one hand controlling the lilac print skirt that bulged and fluttered like a slackened sail in the gay wind of an early spring morning; "I was only cleanin' the windows and just happened to see you out of the corner of my eye."

"It's a deal too pretty an eye to have any corners at all, I'm thinkin'," said the postman.

"Oh, have done with your sweet deceivin', will you!" said Biddy. "What's that you've

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got for me, I wonder. Is it a letter from my young man over the say?"

"Sure, it isn't over the say your young man is, and he's got no need to be writin' letters, glory be to God! But for certain sure it's a letter from over the say; only it is for Miss Cecily."

"Why, it's from Liverpool!" said Biddy, taking the letter and turning it round and round, and then looking at the postmark again. "Miss Cecily doesn't know anybody in Liverpool!"

"Mebbe it's from her young man," suggested the postman slily.

Biddy threw back her rosy head and laughed up at the sun, showing all her white teeth.

"Miss Cecily's young man! Why, she never spoke to a young man in all her life, except only for the priest, and he is not young! She's like a holy sisther, is Miss Cecily."

"Musha, she's an uncommon good-lookin' holy sister, I'll say that," said the postman, as though ready to go to the stake for his conviction.

"Very well, then," said Biddy, turning away; "I'll take the letter to the uncommon good-lookin' holy sisther. It's always the same with the men: give 'em one thing and it's somethin' different they will be afther. But I'm not de-

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spairin'; there are some that like a little colour, and a bit of a figure too!"

"There now, darlin'," whispered the postman, stealing cautiously a little way up the path after her, "don't be hard on a man because he's not blind. What would I have done without eyes to see you with? Sure, I only look at the other women so as to keep on learnin' how much betther you are!"

"Have done, you deceivin' vagrant!" said Biddy, holding one hand behind her and gently caressing his. "And now I must run up with the letter. I wonder will Miss Cicely have time to read it the day? She's very busy. Guess what she's makin'!"

"It will surely be somethin' more for the priest to wear, or mebbe for the Blessed Virgin?"

"Ah, bless the man, never a bit!" said Biddy, laughing again. "It is a weddin' dress she's makin'! And who do you think is likely to have the wearin' of that weddin' dress this time next Wednesday? Ah, sure, it will not be the priest that will be wearin' it!"

He tried to catch her hand again, but she sprang away and ran laughing up the path. At the door she turned round, rosy in the sunshine,

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and held out both arms to him in loving mockery. Then she pulled her frock and apron straight, rearranged her cap before the glass over a dark engraving of Christ saying to the sleeping Peter in the garden, "Couldest thou not watch one hour?" fanned her cheeks with the letter, and drew several long breaths to steady her voice.

"Please, miss," she said, tapping at the door and going in, "here's a letter for you this minute come."

"Just put it down, please, Biddy, till I finish this lily," said Cecily, without looking up from her work. "How is Mr. Sullivan this morning?"

"Please, miss," said Biddy, rosier than ever, "when I saw him he had the appearance of bein' quite well, thank you."

"The dress will be ready by the time, Biddy, but I shall have to work hard. If anyone calls, you must say I'm too busy."

"Yes, miss; and is there anythin' I can be doin' at it?" said Biddy, looking almost timidly at the cream-coloured stuff, along which a border of white silk lilies was beginning to grow.

"Not to-day," Cecily answered. "To-morrow we'll just run it together and see how it fits. But

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you've left me very little time. You shouldn't have been in such a hurry."

"Please, miss," said Biddy, looking down with an excited little gasp, "sure it wasn't me that was in a hurry at all, and I'll wait for the day till it never comes rather than put you to any ill convaynience."

"Oh, we'll be ready," said Cecily cheerfully. "It's best not to wait too long for things."

"Yes, miss, thank you kindly, and that's what *he's* afther sayin', too," said Biddy, and departed.

Absorbed in her work, Cecily went on laying the shining white threads carefully side by side till the outline of the trim lily was well filled up. Then she held it at arm's length both in the shade and the sunshine to see that it was quite perfect, pinned a piece of tissue paper over it to keep it absolutely clean, and stood up, stretching out her arms and fingers for relief from the cramping position.

As she rose, she noticed the forgotten letter lying, face downwards, on the table. Still thinking of the wedding-gown, and looking at it critically with her head a little on one side, she took the letter up carelessly and tore the envelope open without troubling to read the address. She

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unfolded it, still without looking, and then glanced down.

"My only beloved!" it began. Her heart gave one great bound and then stopped beating, and then began beating again with such furious wildness that she had to lean both hands upon the table and stand with her head bowed between them till the darkness passed away from her eyes.

When she looked down again, the letter lay on the green cloth open before her face. She did not take it up. Her mind seemed to absorb the words in one long stare, without reading from line to line. The handwriting was small, but singularly clear. Oh, how well she knew it! And yet it was changed—a little different—"A very little different," the thought came and passed unconsciously and unrecognised through her mind.

"My only beloved," it said, "I am coming back to you. To-morrow evening—only a few hours after you get this letter—I shall be with you. Only a few hours now and I shall see you again, shall hear you speak, shall touch you again—you for whom I have longed from day to day through all these years. Let me

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not go mad before the moment comes! To-morrow about this time I shall be with you. Only these few hours, and you will take me to your heart, and the past will be forgotten. I do not ask forgiveness. I only ask you to take me to your heart—me, the man who adores you, and never in all these years have loved any other but you."

Cecily stood and gazed at the letter, not reading it again or needing to read it at all, but overwhelmed by the waves of emotion that swept through her without taking the form of thoughts and made her limbs tremble against the table's edge.

"Then she is dead," she said aloud at last.

As she said it, she looked up. Through the open window she saw the budding lilacs and cherry trees of her garden. Between their leaves was the blue-green water of the bay, flecked with white under a cheerful wind, and far across the bay stood the Wicklow hills, misty with sweeping showers that the early sun behind her cottage touched with patches of rainbow.

"The lilacs were in full flower the day he went—that day," she said. "I was just twenty-three then—and now—in two more years I shall

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be thirty. Oh, it is impossible—impossible! To be thirty in two years!"

She crossed the room hastily to a square mirror hanging on the plain, whitewashed wall, and looked herself full in the face. The increased sadness that came into her eyes proclaimed her condemnation. Pulling open a drawer in her writing-desk, she took out a photograph and scrutinised it intently.

"I gave him one that very day," she said, and with the photograph in her hand she looked into the mirror again and compared the reflection with the picture.

"Photographs are always toned down—that's the worst of them—they always flatter a little," she said, and then she looked again. In the glass it was a face of singular purity—a nun's face, anyone would have said—pale, with quiet and firmly closed mouth, and kind, grey eyes, and masses of light-brown hair growing low over the wide and upright forehead. The mirror just showed the delicate white neck, like a lily's stalk, and the spotless white collar and close-fitting serge dress from which it sprung. The face in the photograph was exactly the same in feature and pose, but the eyes were full of

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laughter, and the mouth was overflowing with winsome mockery and affection for all the world.

"It is only happiness I have lost," she said—"only happiness and five years!"

She put the photograph away again and stood still, trying to realise what had happened. The sight of the letter lying open upon the table startled her afresh. It seemed so impossible that it should be there. She took it up as though to read it again more carefully. But she did not read it, she rubbed it against her cheek. Then she kissed it timidly, just on the last word, looked at it and kissed it again. Undoing two buttons of her dress, she drew out a silken bag, and took from it another letter—the edges of the envelope quite worn through, and the folds of the paper so thin that they almost fell apart. The postmark was Liverpool, like the other's.

"Dear old words!" she said. "I must not let you be jealous of this strange new comer—you who have lived at my heart so long."

As she unfolded it tenderly, it seemed for the first time strange to her that the head on the stamp was the old Queen's. "Ah, dear words, you belong to another age," she said.

How brown and faded the ink was, compared

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to the deep blacks and purples of the new rival! She put the two side by side. The writing was almost the same—almost! And yet, as she had noticed at the first glance, there was ever so little a change. For all its delicacy, the new writing was not quite so carefully formed. There was a look of hurry and impatience at the finish of the words, as though it were no longer worth while to maintain so rigorous a perfection. Stooping down, she kissed the old letter passionately over and over again as though she could never stop.

"Beloved," she whispered to it, "my darling, my sweet boy, I should indeed have killed you with much cherishing."

Then half under her breath she repeated the well-known words to herself. "My only beloved," they began, "I must send you one more message of farewell and hope and perfect love before we start. I am writing in my little berth on the liner. Thank heaven, I have got a cabin all to myself, where I can be in peace and think of all your sweetness, and at night I shall be alone, and can fall asleep thinking of you as I always do, and wake to remember my secret joy, my fair white rose among women who has given me her perfect and rapturous heart—my laughing rose, my sweet-

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mouthed girl. Every day I will write to you—you will get all my letters at once within a fortnight from now. What is a fortnight? Since I knew you and all the world was changed, I have sometimes lived a fortnight without sight or word of you, and still I have lived. Every waking minute of night and day you are in my thoughts, I love the whole world because I love you.

"Dearest, in six months I shall be back. I know I am going to succeed. Think what a thought I have to urge me on! In six months I shall be back, and when next the liner starts with me, you will be at my side. The cabin may be small, but there will be no fear of anyone else sharing it then, and it will be big enough—oh, big enough be sure! I will lay out your pretty things and make it all so sweet for you. Your spare dresses will be spread upon the upper berth, or hung in the little wardrobe, and night and day we shall be together—I and my sweet white rose—I dare not think of it or it will drive me mad.

"Dearest heart, the second bell is ringing, and the people who are not going with us have to get on shore. I must send this now to the post by someone, so that you may have the surprise of a very last word from me. Not that you need it,

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for you know my heart is always yours and lives within your heart. Beloved, I kiss your feet and your hands and your honey hair and your laughing mouth and tender eyes, and one last long kiss I give to the breast that holds me in its snow-white shrine. My only beloved, good-bye, good-bye."

When the last word was read, she folded both letters up, put them together into the silken bag, laid them next her skin, and buttoned them securely under her bodice. "You may stay side by side for the time," she murmured—"just for the time, you understand."

When they were out of sight, she sat down beside the table and hid her eyes in her hands, trying to concentrate all her thoughts upon the thing that had happened. It seemed as though the solid earth were cut from under her, and she were floating about in the uncertain air, or drifting helplessly upon the opposing currents of a tide. How dreary but persistent had been the effort with which she had built up that little patch of ground, where for five years she had struggled to stand unmoved and show a brave face to the world! And now in one moment it was all gone. The life which she had laboured so carefully to

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make presentable and useful to others, and at times even consoling to herself, was now turned upside down, and she saw that all her effort and pretence had been in vain. That consolation which had seemed so spiritual had lasted only as long as there was no choice. Her strength of purpose had melted away at the first warm touch. Where was that fine assumption of indifference with which month after month she had battled against malice and pity alike, till at last both had held their tongues in despair at her rigorous silence? Where was the pride, and where the purity, which she had planted like lilies and watered with tears, and had seemed almost to see on each side of her bed when she lay down and rose up?

She raised her head and looked round the room again. To herself it was full of symbols of that long and unhappy struggle against her own soul and the world. Except that there was no crucifix in it, and one plain mirror hung on the wall, it was like a cloister cell. The walls and floor were bare; the two chairs were of common wood; on the large, square table pieces of needlework were arranged, either for sale or for sending away to various churches. Propped loosely against one side of the room were

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designs for a rood-screen and an organ-case. How weary and trivial they all seemed now—these things on which she had fed the dignity of her soul! And what was that white heap on the floor? Oh, it was Biddy's wedding-dress, and she was in a hurry to get it done! Throwing both arms out over the table, she laid her cheek upon the cloth. "Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do? Will no one help me?" she moaned.

"Please, miss, it's the butcher," said Biddy's voice at the half-opened door.

"Nothing to-day, thank you," said Cecily, hastily snatching up the embroidery, and Biddy withdrew in awestruck silence.

But she had hardly gone when Cecily sprang up and called after her, "Biddy, I forgot, we must have something for to-night. Someone may be coming, and perhaps he'll stay to dinner."

"Then we must, miss," said Biddy; "and there's a very nice little loin of lamb."

"Just this once—just this once," Cecily thought to herself, "I might treat him as though he were mine."

"I'm hopin' you've not had bad news, miss," said Biddy shyly when she came back.

"When you were a little girl," said Cecily,

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beginning to work again, "do you remember Miss Williamson—Molly Williamson—up at the Stone House?"

"I wasn't so very little," said Biddy, "not when she went away. Kingstown's Beauty she was called, and she went away all on a sudden. My mother used to be talkin' sometimes of her goin' to America."

"Yes, she was very pretty," said Cecily.

"We used to be thinking she was like the Blessed Virgin come down."

"She was my dearest friend—at school and afterwards," said Cecily, "and now she is dead. Her husband has just written to tell me. She died in America."

"God rest her soul!" whispered Biddy, crossing herself.

Neither spoke for a while, and Cecily went on with the embroidery, trying to follow the pattern she had so carefully marked out.

"You're not fit to be doin' it, please, miss, you are not," said Biddy timidly at last.

Cecily dropped the stuff on her lap.

"Whatever happens, we must get it done," she said. "Or wait now! You shall wear a frock that I once made for myself. In the bottom

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long drawer in my room you'll find a long white parcel. Bring that down and we'll see."

Biddy came back at once, carrying the soft, white thing reverently like a new-born baby.

"Oh, miss," she cried, as they laid its loveliness open upon the table, "I never knew you were ever going to be married."

"Oh, no; I was not," said Cecily, smoothing it gently out, and stooping to smell the lavender with which it was strewn. "I was keeping it to be buried in."

"Mercy on us!" cried Biddy. "Is it marryin' me in a shroud you are?"

"There, dear, that's nothing. I didn't mean it," said Cecily soothingly. "It's only a frock I made once for a ceremony, and I never went to the ceremony, so I never wore it, and you can have it now. Come, try it on. We shall have to take it up a good deal, I'm afraid."

"O Lord, miss," said Biddy presently, as she fastened the tender caress of softness across her breast, "this frock was never made for you! Why, beggin' your pardon, it's almost too big in the front even for me!"

"It fitted me when I made it," said Cecily, kneeling down and pinning up the skirt to the

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right length. "But that's five years ago. I daresay it wouldn't exactly fit me now, though it might not be so much out as you think. You see, being tall, I look thinner than I am. But, anyhow, it's your dress now, so it doesn't matter."

"What time does it get dark now?" she asked suddenly when the fitting was over.

"Please, miss, it's almost light at second post time," said Biddy; and blushing furiously she added, "I mean it doesn't get dark till afther six."

"And the boat comes in soon after five, and it's half an hour's walk," said Cecily, looking out of the window. "There, that will be all right, Biddy! We'll just go over these alterations to-morrow, and then we'll be ready for anything that may happen."

"Oh, miss, I hope nothin' is goin' to happen anyway!" said Biddy, with a lingering look of admiration at the dress as she drew the soft paper over it.

"Oh, no!" Cecily answered lightly. "Nothing will happen—nothing, nothing. Only it's always well to be ready."

She was alone again, and again she tried to gather her thoughts and realise what change had

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come. But she could not think, she could only remember. The visions flew. She saw him as she had seen him first, that evening, when she heard his name as the most distinguished man of his year at Trinity College. She felt again the slow beginnings in herself, when she trembled into love and had not dared to call it by its name. And then came the tender uncertainty of the winter's courtship, the delicate hopes of every day, the rainbow hues that shone from every little word and every sign of passionate care. And last the sudden change, like the outburst of song of all birds at sunrise, that spring evening when he held her face to his, and without a word she gave him all her soul for this world and for ever.

She went hurriedly out into the open air that she might breathe. The children were pattering along the road on their way from school, and in the town below a man was crying his wares. The air was warm with the smell of wallflowers and lilac, and purple shadows chased the sunshine over the heather on the mountains. Something—perhaps the smell of the flowers—suddenly called up the letters she had written. At the parting beside the white gate there—that long

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parting so full of sorrow and yet so happy in its perfect assurance of faith—she had promised that every morning she would write at least one word and keep it till the next mail-boat. Every morning she had written; she had sat under the lilacs to write. She had written words that she would hardly have dared to speak. Fourteen letters she had written. He must have received them in batches. And when he received them he was not alone. Someone else was at his side night and day. With a cry of shame she leant upon the gatepost and hid her face.

At the usual time Biddy laid her food on the garden table. In the afternoon customers came —a priest about the screen for his church, and ladies about designs for their dresses at the first Viceregal ball of the season. She conversed with them all as usual, and sent them away soothed and pleasurably expectant. Minute by minute the time drew nearer, but she hardly thought it would really come. When at last she heard the hooting of the mail-boat putting into harbour, it startled her to remember what it meant. She hurried up to her room with its scanty furniture and narrow little bed, dressed quickly but with care, brushing out her long hair again, and

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choosing a black frock of light and delicate stuff that hung round her like a mist. At the breast she fastened one deep amethyst that had been her mother's. She took off the single ring she had been wearing, and locked it in a little drawer with the two letters that she had hidden in her bosom. Then she looked long at herself in the glass. There was no doubt she was beautiful. She felt she could be still full of bright attractiveness. But there was a change. It was not the face that once had looked back into her eyes and had smiled with joy to think she could look so sweet to her lover.

"He loves me still," she said as she turned away and put the candles out, "but it is only a memory he loves. And I—I must love only a memory, too."

The thin grey of evening was turning to deep purple now. In the room downstairs the fire was glowing, and Biddy was laying out the tea-things.

"Yes, for two, please," Cecily said. "You needn't light the candles. We'll pretend it is summer already."

Unable to be still, she went out into the porch. The wind was rising, and far below she heard the murmur of the sea. A sea-bird cried as it

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passed through the darkening air. Listening intently, she watched the dim white gate. Now a footstep was coming along the road—a quick footstep that knew the way. The gate opened. Somebody was coming up the shingly path, and like one in a trance she went to meet him.

She was so quick that she got more than half way to the gate before they met.

"Oh, is it really you?" said a soft, low voice —the voice was still the same—and two hands were held out to her, but she did not take them.

"I knew you would receive me," he went on; "I knew you would forgive me. You were always so full of sweetness. Oh, I cannot believe that I am really with you again!"

He looked at the white face set in the blue of the coming night. He put a hand on her arm, but as he touched it he felt ever so slight a movement of resistance, and he saw that her eyes were shut.

"She is dead?" she said at last.

He dropped his hand, and said, "We are free to be together now."

She turned away and moved a few steps towards the house, just holding out one hand as if to invite him to follow.

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"Will you not speak to me, dearest?" he said. "Oh, how passionately I have desired to see you again all these years! And now I am here."

"How did she die?" she asked, standing still, but not looking round.

He did not answer for a while. At last he said, "It was her little baby."

"Oh, no, no—not that!" she cried, shuddering away from him. "Oh, Molly, my darling, my beautiful Molly, my only friend!"

He stood silent, looking out over the sea. A spark on a far-off lightship flashed every few seconds and went out.

"Where is the baby?" she whispered.

"It died," he said, "both of them have died. It is as though the whole terrible thing had never happened."

"There was another?" she said.

"About four years ago," he answered. "It lived a little while. She got to be very happy with it. Then it died. I was very sorry when it died. It was terrible."

"Come," she said. "Tea is ready. You must want it after your journey."

They went in silence up to the door. Like a

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man returning from a dreary city, he perceived the breath of the flowers and the audible stillness of the air, and gazed at all the little details that suddenly reappeared with poignant memory.

"It is all the same," he said, as they entered, "just the same as in those happy days."

"Yes, it looks much the same," she answered. "There, sit in my own chair by the fire. Wait now, and I'll give you some tea. You have come from the other side of God speed, as we used to say."

"Are you living alone now, dearest?" he asked.

"Yes, quite alone since mother went, three years ago."

"I saw the notice in the papers," he said. "I have always taken the Dublin papers. Sometimes I saw your work mentioned. How clever you have always been!"

"Oh, I get plenty of work, I am glad to say—any amount. But I oughtn't to have said I was alone. Here's Biddy. No, thank you, Biddy. You needn't light the candles yet."

"Beg your pardon, miss; sure I thought it was dark," said Biddy, standing embarrassed, with the matches in her hand.

"Never mind; we both like the firelight. We

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shall not want anything else, thank you. You have brought the cream?"

"I have," said Biddy, and went out to wonder in the kitchen.

Left alone, they said little to each other while she waited on him, moving softly about the room. At last he threw himself back in the chair and said in a trembling voice—

"Aren't you glad to see me, dearest?"

She sat down on a low stool near him and looked into the fire.

"Glad!" she said. "Oh, what a terrible question!"

"You do not know what drove me to do that thing," he said pleadingly, after a pause.

"Oh yes, I know—I know enough," she sighed. "I know she stayed hidden on the steamer till after you had started, and so you married her. She must have been very fond of you. I should have gone with you then, only mother needed me, and I was afraid of hindering your career."

"But you do not know what really happened," he said.

"It does not matter now," she answered.

"A steward saw her come to my cabin late

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that night," he went on. "Next morning I tried to keep her hidden, but the captain came and swore he'd expose her before the whole ship unless we could say we were married. She hadn't got a ticket or anything, and that was what made him angry. She had simply stayed on board when the rest went ashore. Then he brought a parson, who said he could marry us and no one need know there was anything wrong. You remember what she was—how wild and high-spirited. How could I hand her over to be mocked at by the whole ship all the voyage? What could I do? To have exposed her to such a thing would have been worse than killing her outright. I ask you, what could I have done?"

"One thing you might have done," she answered, standing up. "You might have got out of the porthole and fallen into the sea when she came. If a man had come to my cabin, I should have done that rather than be false to you."

"Ah, but it is so different for a man! When a woman comes and says, 'See how dearly I love you! For your sake I have run all risks. I have broken all ties. I only ask to be by your side. Oh, do not turn me away!' what can one

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do? It is hard to say one does not love her and to thrust her out when she offers everything for love."

"You mean it is impolite to say no," said Cecily, gazing out of the window into the darkness.

"Yes, impolite, if you like to call it so," he answered doggedly. "It is hard to be impolite to a woman."

"I have been impolite to many men," she answered with a little laugh. "Quite uncomplimentary!"

"It is different for a man," he said again.

"How pretty she was!" Cecily murmured in a changed voice. "O God, O God, why is everything so horrible?"

"And besides—besides——" he went on, like one who has set his face to get through some terrible difficulty. But there he broke off: "No, it's no good trying to explain. You would never understand. No woman could."

"The very cabin where you had written that letter to me!" Cecily said, still staring at the blank of the window. "Was there no knife to run into your heart rather than desecrate three souls like that?"

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"She came, she loved me, she had given up everything!"

"I would have given up everything and you know it—everything except my faith in you."

"She was so beautiful, and we were alone."

"You said I was always in your heart."

"Yes, you were in my heart; you always have been. That made no difference."

"No, that made no difference!" she said, suddenly facing round towards the fire so that her pale face glowed red in its light. "That I was always in your heart never made any difference. Look now, if I had been going away, loving you as I did, and a man had followed me for love—a handsome man, if you like—and had come to my cabin at night, and I had quietly let him stay and had pleaded that he loved me so, but you were all the time in my heart—what would you have thought? Now, tell me, what would you have thought?"

She looked at him for the first time with steady eyes, and saw the firelight gleaming on silver threads in his hair. She was glad to see them; she did not stop to think why.

He turned his face away. "I should have gone mad with envy of him," he said.

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"Never mind about him," she answered. "What would you have thought of me?"

"I loved you so deeply, I should have forgiven you anything," he said; "anything in the world I should have forgiven you."

"Oh, forgiveness—yes! What is the good of forgiveness?" she cried. "It is easy enough to forgive. I don't know what it means, this forgiveness that people talk about! What can it do? Can it alter the past? Can it make the present different from what it is? Can it undo the change that has come? If you said to me, 'I forgive you,' would it make me what I was before? Would it make yourself what you were before? Would it ever bring back to you the thing you had loved, or the spirit you loved it with? Forgiveness? It doesn't seem to me to mean anything at all."

"And yet people call it divine," he said.

"Oh, I know—I know," she cried, pacing up and down the room with her hands clasped behind her head. "It may be divine, of course. I can't say. I am only a woman, and I know that to me it is meaningless. As you said of something else, it makes no difference."

His head sank upon his arms as she spoke.

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She stopped beside him and laid a hand ever so gently on his hair.

"Dear head," she said, "that was dearest of all things to me. Dear head, that was so full of noble thoughts and glorious hope—that was so tender to me—to me and to everyone! Too tender you were to everyone, too much afraid of giving pain. Dear head, that once loved me so truly, how I would have cherished you by day and night upon my heart!"

"O God," he groaned, his face still hidden in his arms, "will you have no mercy—no mercy on the man who has loved you all these years?"

"Ah, yes," she sighed. "Mercy is as easy as forgiveness. Only tell me what the real mercy is!"

"Come back with me in the ship—come to-night, to-morrow, next week, when you like," he cried. "I can wait for you. I have waited five years."

"Was it five hours you waited after you wrote me that letter in the cabin?" she said softly. "Was it as much as five? In that very same cabin!"

"Oh, do not think of that for ever!" he said.

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"That was nothing—a moment's temptation—a rush of passionate desire. Before the night turned, the bitterness of regret had come, and it has lasted ever since."

"I know it was nothing," she answered. "I know it was a moment's temptation. But with the turn of the night the moon and stars were changed, and the sun—oh, the sun has never risen since!"

"Do you think," he asked, looking up at her—"do you think the best of men are faithful, as it is called, to the woman they love? How should you know what wild beasts we are where women are concerned?"

"O Molly," she cried, turning from him, "if only you were alive again, that I might stand by your side in all your pain."

For a long time they were silent, she standing by the fireplace with her face in deep shadow, and watching the light of the flames upon his deeply cut features, and the strong lines across his forehead.

"I have been very successful," he said suddenly, though for some unrealised reason she had been expecting him to say it.

"I am so glad," she said; "I never doubted

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you would be. I was only afraid you might not have enough hardness of heart."

"I have gained that too," he said.

"That's right," she answered. "One needs it for success."

"I need only you to complete my life," he went on. "I have always needed you. You are a necessity to me—now more than ever."

"Now that she is dead," Cecily murmured.

"Oh, do not mock me any more," he cried, starting up and coming towards her impetuously, till his coat touched her filmy dress. "I love you passionately. I love you body and soul. Come with me. I have longed for you for five years. Come with me this very night."

She felt herself swing and totter. She almost reeled as she leant back against the mantelpiece.

"What ghost would be between us?" she gasped.

"Why do you speak as if I had murdered her?" he said, still standing close to her side. "I did not murder her at all. I was always very kind to her. There is no reason why she should haunt us."

"Ah, dear one," she said quietly now, "it was not *her* ghost I saw. It was the ghost of

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ourselves, the ghost of what we were once, and might have been. God forgive me, I was not thinking of her. I have thought of her very little. Oh, it is horrible—horrible! Think what it must have been for her. Did she speak of me?"

"We never said your name—never once. But she never stopped thinking of you day or night, just as I never stopped. That thought was a ghost lying between us, if you will," he added bitterly.

"Did she never stop—not even—not even when those things you spoke of happened. I mean when her children were born," she said, turning to the fire again.

"Then least of all," he said, sitting down gloomily; "those were the worst times. She was full of superstitions, and all her terrors came true. She made them come true. That was the thing that killed her. She kept thinking—thinking. I was always very kind to her—always."

"If you had but been unkind at the very beginning—at the very beginning! Did I not say hardness of heart was the only thing you needed? Look what cruelty has been done through pity and politeness!"

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"It was not only pity and politeness," he answered drearily. "I have told you that; I have told you what it was. Do not let us go back. I am fighting for my life."

"We are both fighting for our lives," she said, "but our true lives are lost already. Tell me," she said in a lower tone, "at the very beginning—long ago—did you get some letters from me?"

"They are here," he said; "they have never left me all these years."

Without looking round, she held out a hand towards him. He drew a ragged packet of letters from an inner pocket, and gave them to her. She turned over the first few, till she came to one at which she stopped. Slowly she took it from the envelope and held it open before her. Then with one clutch of the hands she crumpled it up and flung it into the heart of the fire. The others she threw on the top of it unread, and held them tightly down among the flames. Her face was red as the heart of the fire itself.

"Oh, shame, shame!" she cried, while her back and shoulders shuddered. "That you should read a letter like that, and all the time, day and night, you were living side by side with another woman."

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"Do you think I ever showed her a letter of yours?" he cried angrily.

"Oh, no, no!" she said. "That wouldn't have been any worse. But you read my letters in the evening, when she had gone upstairs and you were alone. And then, after you had read the things I said to you—those things I said because I loved you—you followed her, you found her there, you kissed her, and were kind to her, as you say. Oh, it is all inconceivable!—it is all too full of shame!"

He had stood up as she spoke, and was leaning his arms against the mantelpiece, with his face sunk in them.

"Forgive me, dear," she said, touching his coat sleeve. "I didn't mean to make it hard for you. I am sorry I said that, but I saw it all so plain. It was like a fire. Now I will be quiet again. Oh, I am so sorry, dearest."

He turned towards her, and their eyes met in the firelight. Taking both her arms, he drew her close to his side. She resisted no more, but put her hands round his head, and with closed eyes drew his face down to hers. It seemed as though that long embrace could never end. Neither of them dared to let it end, lest there

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should be no renewal of it ever again. It was the only poor relic of compensation for the years —the one little jewel snatched from the ruins of a treasure-house that might have been their own—and they could not let it go.

At last, to draw breath, she turned her head away, and laid her face upon his shoulder.

"Look," she whispered; "I must send you away. I cannot endure it. You see how impossible it is. I dare not be with you. I thought at first it might be possible, but it is not. What kind of life could we two ever have together now?"

"Then you do not love me any more?" he said.

"Oh," she answered, "I am so frightened—so frightened of ceasing to love you!"

"You used not to be afraid of that," he said bitterly. "What is the change these years have made in me?"

"In you?" she said. "Oh, I was not thinking of any change in you. It is I who am changed. I have lost something; I hardly know what it is—some kind of golden spirit—and it will never come back. Don't ask me any more. I see everything clearly now; I see how impossible it would be. Cannot you see that?"

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"I adore you," he said; "I would do my utmost. I think I could make you happy still."

"Ah, there was no question of 'still' in the old days," she said, drawing herself gently from his arms. "What is the good of a second best? Happiness doesn't count. Give me back what I was, and I will come with you."

"It might come right in time," he said, turning away drearily.

"Yes, it might come what you call right," she cried passionately. "We might sink into a comfortable acquiescence. You and I—we who have been what we were to each other—we might begin making allowances and thinking we were fairly happy after all, as married people go. We might degrade ourselves into complacency and satisfaction. There would always be one thing we could not talk about for fear of hurting each other's feelings and disturbing our miserable contentment. But we should rot into peace, and day and night we should loathe our very souls. Oh, I implore you to go. We have still time to save ourselves from that and end it all!"

"To end it all," he repeated vacantly, looking round the little room.

"You must go, dearest," she whispered;

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"you must go, so that you may never cease to be dear."

Still he did not move.

"Good-bye," she said, going to him and gently kissing his shoulder. "Good-bye. I ask you to go now. You cannot refuse a woman's last request, as some poor queen said to her executioner."

Without looking at her, he took up his hat, and she went with him to the door.

"You must never come again," she said, as they passed out into the night. "You must not write to me till you are dying. As long as we are not together, the worst cannot happen. We cannot cease to love each other as we were once."

As they went down the path there was a scuffle of feet under the deep shadow of the lilac beside the gate, and Biddy emerged into the light of the setting moon.

"Please, miss, I've been gathering a little mint for the lamb," she said as she hurried past them, panting with innocent excitement. "Dinner's just upon ready."

"I'm sorry to find my friend cannot stay, so don't mind about it," said Cecily.

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"Good-bye," she said, giving him her hand when they came to the road.

"Good-bye," he answered, and was gone.

She stayed beside the gate till the pale moon sank behind the mountains and the last sign of her brightness disappeared from the windy clouds. The postman, hidden in the lilac shade, felt very awkward and ridiculous, all the more because now and then she uttered a low cry.

"For a man like me," he said afterwards, "it was an extremely painful situation."

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THE COMPANION SHIP

And is it true that I must leave
  The morning and the midday light,
And the lit stars that hang at eve
  From the blue dome of coming night?

That I must leave the various face
  Of the big sea in sun and rain,
And let another take my place
  When the old ship puts out again?

'Tis cruel, and more cruel far
  To leave the soul who is to me
Both sun and rain and night and star
  And infinitely various sea.

And what if she should go before—
  Go in the dark, and I be left
Haunting alone a haunted shore,
  Unsteered, a derelict bereft?

Some say there is a spirit thing
  Which after death may still abide,
And that the very self takes wing
  Or sails on an eternal tide.

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For the bare chance of that, I'll choose
To board death's boat, crowd sail, and fly,
Chasing her hard astern, nor lose
One bell of her eternity.

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XIII

THE LAST RAG

SHE was sitting on a muddy step at the entrance to a court in Gray's Inn Road. A cold and misty rain was falling through the fog. Across the road a policeman in his waterproof cape was making himself as thin as he could under the meagre shelter of a shop door. A tramcar growled past, carrying to their sleepy wives a few journalists who had run up from Fleet Street to catch it, with the courage of two o'clock in the morning. A few homeless men loitered up and down, waiting for daylight and some unimaginable change. A few dismal women splashed along the pavement, anxious to make what bargain they could for a cup of warmth at a night coffee-stall or half an hour's sleep in the dry corner of a tram.

The woman sat on, and let the rain trickle down her ragged brown skirt on to her large

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boots, from which lumps of stocking stuck out, all sodden with dirt and water. An old grey shawl was knotted tightly round her chest, and stuck by two hairpins to her head was a black straw relic that had once been a bonnet, but was now transfigured to a hat by the loss of strings. From under its cover long wisps of faded brown hair kept falling over her faded blue eyes and deeply lined cheeks. Now and then she twisted them back impatiently, but they always fell again, and all the time she never ceased a low lamentation, which she poured out in a wailing voice of despair, but without tears.

"I've never done such a thing in all my life before," she said. "Never, never, never have I done such a thing. No, I never have. I was all right up till then. There was nobody couldn't say I wasn't a respectable woman up till then. Never in all my life before have I done such a thing. No, I never have, never up till this blessed afternoon. I never thought I should come to do them kind of things. It didn't seem likely, me being what I am and always have been, thank Gord. And now I've been and done it, and never before in all my life have I done such a thing, never, never."

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So she went on with unending repetition, and all the time the rain trickled down her ragged skirts and soaked into the bulging holes of her boots.

One of the homeless men, who had been drearily tramping up and down for warmth, stopped, as he passed her for the third or fourth time, and looked up the covered entrance to the court.

"Why don't you go inside, Sooky?" he said. "You'll get your pretty little feet damp out here."

"Go and blast yourself. My feet don't matter," she answered.

"Maybe not," he said; "but there's a reg'lar river runnin' down the middle of the passage, and it's backin' up against you through you sittin' on its way out."

"It don't matter how I sits," she answered, and went on with her lamentation. "Never, never before have I done such a thing, no, never in all my life."

"Well, if yer 'ave a partiality for livin' on the tideway, it ain't no affair of mine," said the man; "only, by yer leave, I'll step over you and get into the dry myself.'

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He strode over her shoulder, and sat down on a dry part of the pavement with his feet up against the opposite wall.

"Never up to this day have I done such a thing," she went on to herself.

"This ain't so bad," he said; "I always did like 'aving a roof over my 'ead. Just you come up 'ere, Sooky, and set alongside of me. It's fine and dry, and by gettin' close up we'll keep each other warm on the one side, and then change about, till we goes to sleep to the sound of the murmurin' stream as runs under our legs."

"Blast the murmurin' stream!" she answered, but nevertheless she lifted herself up with some difficulty, and came along the passage towards him. As she rose the gutter discharged itself with a little flood into the street, as at the bursting of a miniature dam, and when she sat down again it was with the squelch of a wet mop stood to rest.

"Now there ain't only one thing I asks of you," she said, as she drew up close to his side: "none of yer love-makin' for me to-night. 'Cos why, I haven't got the 'eart, and there ain't nothink turns a woman's stomick quicker than love-makin' when she hasn't got the 'eart."

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"You're right," said the man; "I've found that out with females—decent females, anyways."

"There's no call for you to be talkin' about decent females," she answered.

"Keep yer 'air on, my dear," he said. "I was only meanin' a compliming by includin' of you among that class."

"Burn your complimings!" she cried. "What's the good of calling me a decent female now? You might have said it this time yesterday, and no harm done. Yus, I was decent enough up till about 'alf-past four or five. You're right. I was as decent as any woman could wish. I hadn't done it then. Not at half-past four I hadn't done it, and I never should have thought I'd come to do such a thing—never, never should I have thought it."

Rocking herself gently backwards and forwards, with her eyes fixed in vacancy upon the opposite wall, she began again to pour out her monotonous lamentation.

"Oh, cheese it, Sooky!" said the man at last. "I shan't never get no sleep if you keep on rampin' and caterwaulin' like that. Why can't you keep quiet, and then we'll get warm and comfortable alongside of each other?"

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"Oh, I can't, I can't! I never thought I should have done it," said the woman, beginning to cry, and smearing the tears over her cheeks with the end of her wet shawl. "I ain't 'appy, and I never was one to be comfortable if I wasn't 'appy. Same as when old Ben bashed my 'ead in, and I laid in the 'orspital, nice and clean as could be. But comfortable? No, not me!"

"Well, who's been bashin' at yer now, then?" asked the man.

"It ain't that," she answered. "I done it myself this time, and that's what there's no gettin' over."

"Oh, blast you, spit it out and have done with it," said the man impatiently. "You look as if you'd done most things in your time, same as the rest of us."

"So I 'ave, most things, but I never done such a thing as this before, never, never."

"Don't yer keep on squawkin' like that," he said, as she began to cry again. "What's the matter with yer? Have you bilked a man as stood you a drink, or what?"

"Oh, that's nothink, nothink at all," she answered, smearing her eyes again and sniffing violently. "Them sort o' things is only part of

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makin' an honest livin', and an honest livin' I always 'ave made, thank Gord, up to now—up to now."

Seeing she was on the point of breaking down again, the man said quickly, "Well then, if it aint bilkin' a gentleman, p'raps you've 'ad a discrepancy with the police about your takin' things?"

But his question only made worse of it. "No," she said, with a voice rising to a wail, "there wasn't no discrepancy. It was the thing as I took; that's where the trouble lays."

"Oh, well," he said soothingly, "if it was nothink but takin' somethink as you wanted, I don't see as that matters much, so long as you didn't 'ave no discrepancy. You 'aven't got any of it left about you, 'ave yer, Sooky?" he added coaxingly.

"Only inside of me," she said with a gulp, as though to hold something down.

"Swallowed it?" he asked in astonishment. "Jools, was it?"

"No, it wasn't jools," she sobbed; "it were a 'alfpenny bun."

"Ger along with yer 'alfpenny bun," he said, settling down against the wall and closing his eyes.

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"Yus," she said, pouring out her story now without in the least considering whether her companion was listening or not, "it was this very afternoon, about the time as they was lightin' up the lamps. Up to the lightin' of the lamps you might have called me a decent woman, and nobody couldn't have said nothink against yer. Up to this very afternoon I'd always made my livin' honest since the day as I first went on the streets, all along of old Ben and his always wantin' money for the drink. But they was lightin' up the lamps, and I finds myself standin' promiscuous on the gratin' of the Palace Music-'all, and feelin' the warm from the furnace below creep up my legs fine and dryin' my boots same time."

"You're right," said the man, sleepily interrupting her: "them gratin's is a public benefaction. Talk of free libr'ies! Why, free libr'ies isn't fit to die in the same street with the Palace Music-'all—not as public institootions, if I may say."

"As I was sayin'," the woman went on, "they was just lightin' up the lamps, and I was standin' there enjoyin' the warm as kep' creepin' up my legs, and only wishin' for some-

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think to fill my belly with, same as we all wishes. So I kep' my eyes lookin' at Lockhart's cocoa shop at the next corner, and watchin' the steamin' urns, and the cakes and sandwiches and that in the winder. And me watchin' and feelin' emptier each minute, out of that door there comes a kind of a thing as yer might call a child, if so be a little gal wasn't more fittin', and she comes waddlin' along, holdin' out a 'alfpenny bun in 'er 'and. How she'd got 'old on the 'alfpenny as bought that bun, Gord in 'eaven only knows. She was almost too small to have pinched it anywheres, and it weren't a bit of stale as Lockhart's man had give her at 'alf-price, 'cos I knows it wasn't. But as she comes along I see she had got nothink on, only a second-'and frock and a bit of tape tied round where her waist had ought to be. And underneath that frock I knowed there wasn't no rag of underclothin', not to speak on. A shimmy and drawers, there maybe was, but nothink else, no more nor what I got myself. And her hair was all ends and anyhow, and on her feet was her mother's old boots. So as she comes waddlin' past, I says imprompter,—'Give us a bite, my dear,' says I.

"And she cops the bun to her bosom, and

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says, 'Who do you think you're gettin' at!' says she, bold as brass.

"'Only a little bit, sweet'eart,' says I.

"And she looks again at me, and then at the bun, and says, 'All right, muvver,' says she, ''ere yer are,' and she 'olds out the bun in her little 'and, and I gives one great bite and wolfs it into my mouth and runs round the corner with it, same as a dog with a rabbit he has sneaked from a coster-stall."

"Well, you are a oner," said the man sleepily. "A oner, that's what you are!"

"Yer may say that," she answered, beginning to whimper again; "yus, yer may say that. I jest had time to see the look of its hinnercent eyes go changed, and to 'ear it start cryin' and howlin' afore I'd whipt around the corner, and'll never see that child no more. Nothink much to look at she weren't, there's no denyin' it, and her dress fit for nothink only a effigy. But I can't abear to think on 'er, I can't abear it, so there."

"Good bun?" asked the man.

"Went down lovely," she answered; "and me fair griped with the gnawin' of my inside. But never again shall I take bite or sup to put into my

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mouth without thinkin' on that child—never again—no, I never shall."

"Oh, for Gord's sake, stow all that snortin," said the man. "I don't see as you got much to complain on. Got a nice bun for nothink, and no blood'ounds or such things turned on to yer. I can't say as it's exactly the sort of thing as I likes doing myself; I always was a kind of a pertickler sort of bloke. I've always been what's called one of nature's gentlemen. But I'm not blamin' them as ain't—not me. Where's the use of blamin' anybody—let alone a female? You might as well take to being a copper at once."

"I never done such a thing before, never," the woman began again. "I always earned a honest livin' up to now, and nobody can't say I 'aven't."

"Nobody ain't blamin' of yer," said the man. "I'm only sayin' as it so 'appened I was brought up pertickler, and 'ave so kep' on. Them as wasn't needn't."

"'Ere yer are, muvver,' that's what she said, and now she'll never give a bite to nobody no more."

"Yus, it's what's called a objick lesson," said the man, "and a very owdacious objick at that."

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"P'r'aps she'll never get another 'alfpenny give her for a bun, never as long as she lives."

"There ain't no sayin'," he said, "p'r'aps she'll take one."

"I wish to Gord I 'adn't got that bun inside of me," she went on.

"You've got to get over it," he answered.

"There are no blasted good in gettin' over it," she said. "I never thought I'd come to do such a thing as that, I never did. It's demeanin', that's what it is."

Her voice died away again into a low murmur, and both were silent. The man's head fell on to her shoulder, and she put an arm round his neck to keep it there. But after a time he woke up again, and began fretfully to shift his position against the wall.

"Lord love yer," she muttered, "why the hell can't yer keep still?"

"'Ungry," he answered; "I'm fair dyin' of 'unger. For Gord's sake, get us somethink to eat at the corffee-stall. 'Aven't yer got a bloomin' 'alfpenny on yer?"

"Not me," she said.

He leant forward and peered down the passage

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into the street, where a few men were waiting about for the next tram.

"Look at that torff with a top 'at on," he said; "couldn't you go and 'tice him down at the back here, and if he didn't fork out a bob, we'd give him a doin' as 'ud make him."

"Don't ask it of me—not to-night," she said. "It ain't as I objeck, mind that! There ain't nothink I wouldn't do by way of an honest livin', but don't ask it of me to-night. I 'aven't got the 'eart."

"I ain't blamin' you," said the man, and folding his arms tight against his body, he sank back again upon the wall.

"He do look rather temptin', 'im with a tall 'at on," said the woman in a minute or two. "Let's try if askin' won't do it. There is tall 'ats as likes being begged of. It kind of shows a decent valuation as you puts on 'em."

She trailed her steps down the passage into the street, and went softly up to the man, who was standing alone.

"No, thank you, my dear," he said before she began to speak; "I'm sorry, but it's no good."

"Oh, kind gen'leman," she said, "for the love of Gord give me the price of a cup of

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corffee. I'm a respectable woman born and bred, and it ain't for myself I'm askin' it of yer, but I got three little children at 'ome, one of 'em only three months and one week; and if you 'eard them cryin' for food, it 'ud make yer feel bad. For you got a kind 'eart, nobody can't 'elp seein' that. And my 'usband 'e's layin' sick in the same bed with 'em through fallin' down a ladder, he being a bricklayer by his trade, and nothink comin' in for seven weeks past this very day. It's Gord's truth I'm tellin' yer, kind gen'leman, strike me dead if it ain't."

He eyed her figure inquisitively for a moment, and then lit a fresh cigarette and turned away.

"Oh, kind gen'leman," she wailed, "think of my pore 'usband layin' on his bed with nothink but his own trousies to cover 'im and his back nearly broke, and the dear little baby as I'm still nursin', and me pretty well gone dry with 'unger. Just one penny, kind gen'leman. What's a penny to a real gen'leman like you?"

He felt in his pocket and threw her a coin, which fell in the mud.

"Gord bless yer kind 'eart!" she said, as she grubbed about for it. "I knew you'd believe a pore woman as told yer nothink but Gord's truth."

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"Here you are, my dear," she cried almost without a pause as she turned up the passage again. "That bloomin' top-'at sucked it in fine. Them top-'ats doesn't get much sense inside of 'em, I must say. Now, what do yer think of that?"

"A tanner!" said the man, getting up to look at it more closely.

"Yus, a tanner!" she answered triumphantly. "Chucked it at me he did, same as a match end, or a bit of fat to a dog. It was the dear little baby at 'ome as done it, bless his little 'eart! Baby, indeed! Me and a baby! Oh, ketch 'old on me, my dear, ketch 'old on me, or I shall die of laughin'."

"What'll yer stand?" said the man, taking her arm and drawing her into the street.

"Stand?" she answered, still laughing; "why I'll stand anythink yer like. Champagne and oysters? Or what do yer say to a real hegg between us? One real hegg and a cup of corffee each, and a 'unk of best bread; that's fivepence, and a penny for luck."

"Yus," he said, "a penny carried forward, as we say in the City."

"Well, there ain't nothink like makin' a

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honest livin', after all," she reflected as they walked down the street arm in arm. "Why, I feels quite matrimonial, I do declare. I say, guv'nor, look smart now," she went on to the keeper of the coffee-stall, "I'm standin' my 'usband a treat. Now, my dear, supper's quite ready. What'll yer 'ave? You've only got to give it a name."

The stall-keeper silently gave them two cups of coffee and a plank of bread and a bit of cake.

"I'll carve if you like, my dear," said the woman, as with an elaborate flourish of the knife she cut the bread and cake in half between them, and whilst the egg was boiling they began to eat with careful and leisurely satisfaction.

But it happened that along his little counter the stall-keeper had arranged tempting plates of bread and butter and ham sandwiches in a row, and the woman's fingers began unconsciously ranging from one to another, rather with a caressing affection than from any other desire.

"Confine yourself to your own particular portion, madam, if you please," said the grim stall-keeper sharply.

Instantly she dropped her hand, and her whole figure seemed to shrink together. Drawing her

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shawl tightly around her again, she turned and walked slowly away.

"Here, Sooky!" cried the man after her, "you've not drunk your corffee more nor 'alf, and there's the egg to foller!"

"Blast the hegg!" she said, going reluctantly further from the stall; "that bloomin' barstud's right; I'd oughter confine myself to my own pertickler portion, same as Gord Almighty give me. Not as I cares the spit of a flea what any barstud says, right *or* wrong, but it calls to mind the thing as I did, and I never did such a thing in all my life before—never, never did I do such a thing."

The sound of her wailing voice died away as she vanished in the obscurity.

"Egg's done," said the stall-keeper, giving it to the man without further remark.

"I'll tell yer where it is," said the man confidentially, as he began eating the egg, and dabbing it on the salt between the bites; "I'll tell yer where it is: females ain't got no sense; that's where it is. And now with that extry penny I'll take a smoke, if you please."

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MISERICORDE

He came in tempest to a convent old,
  High up the mountains on the Italian way,
Seeking a shelter from the sullen cold,
  Where he might wait the dear return of day:
Gold was his armour, and his hair was gold.

And as he slumbered in a chamber dim,
  Came Misery and she crept into the bed,
And laid one hand upon the heart of him,
  And wound one wasted arm about his head:
With tears her eyes were heavy to the brim.

"My hair," she said, "is wet with snow and rain,
  My garment lets the biting weather in,
My girdle is a loop of rusty chain,
  The frost and storm have crinkled all my skin,
And when I smile, half of the smile is pain.

"I stand removed from other women's grace,
  My feet are cut with brambles and with stones,
My body shrinks into a little space,
  And through my very breasts I feel the bones;
Sorrow has graved her trade-mark on my face.

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"But let me sleep beside this heart of thine:
I eat the crusts that dogs have sorted through,
I drink the dregs of vinegar for wine,
But let me sleep as other women do;
No other woman has a heart like mine."

"Then sleep," he said, "if sleep be thy desire;
But for thy loving heart, speak not of it;
I love Delight, whom love can never tire,
And Jollity, who savours love with wit,
And amorous Passion with the lips of fire.

"And I love Plenty's well-contented form,
And the shy limbs of fugitive Daintiness;
I love the fragrant hair, the fingers warm,
What pleasure is there in pale-eyed distress,
Sad at the mouth and frozen with the storm?

"But sleep, if sleep be thy desire," he said,
"So that thou speak of love no more again."
Thereat she rose from out the narrow bed,
And round her loins she hooked the girdle chain,
And passed into the night, nor turned her head.

When yellow sunshine touched the convent old,
Forthwith he fared upon his onward way,
And climbed the pass across the mountain cold,
Till all the sunny plain beneath him lay;
Gold was his armour, and his hair was gold.

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And there within a golden city's gate
  He passed with gladness, and a palace found
High-towered and bastioned as the crown of state,
  Encircling in its walls a garden round,
With many a grove to pleasure dedicate.

Where Plenty day by day her court did keep,
  And Jollity and Delight made laughing love,
And Daintiness allowed her feet to peep
  Under her broidered gown as she did move,
And Passion let him kiss her eyes to sleep.

But ever came some vision of the night
  When one besought him with petition sad,
And laid beside his face a face so white;
  And dreaming on the heart none other had,
He found no solace in a world's delight.

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XIV

THE PINNACLE OF FAME

"DEAREST, dearest!" cried Christabel, hurrying into the dressing-room with the sheets of the *Times* spread out wide in front of her, so that only the excited little face and part of the light holland skirt could be seen. "Oh, dearest, it has come at last! Didn't I tell you it was a grand success? Look! A full leader in the *Times* all about you and the lecture."

"There's glory!" said her husband, while his razor went steadily on, scraping the sunburnt skin.

"Glory?" she cried, "I should think so. Even the fools will honour you now. It's superb."

"Shall I tell you why?" he said. "It's because yesterday was Derby-day. The situation of the Empire is critical, and our rulers decided the whole concern would topple over if they stayed

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away from the race. So editors had to search out subjects for their leader-writers. Splendid luck!"

"Oh, who cares about the Derby?" she said absently, for she was skimming through the leader and carefully picking out the words of praise. "No one said a word about it at the Society."

"No," he answered. "Anthropologists don't think much of the Derby. It isn't even a survival of marriage by capture. We take our barbarians raw. Men in clothes are hardly counted as anthropes."

"Don't talk nonsense," she said, sliding one arm round his pyjamas and rubbing her cheek against his shoulder. "Now, listen to this!"

Holding up the paper in one hand, she went on reading: "'There is no doubt that Mr. Cranleigh, whose volume on his adventures in the Solomon Islands we noticed in these colums a few weeks ago, must now be reckoned among the foremost anthropologists of this or any other age. His lecture before the Society last night was little short of a revelation.'"

"Revelation's good," he murmured; "but don't shake my sword-arm!"

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"Be quiet, you naughty child!" she said, kissing his sleeve. "Now it goes on: 'It is not only that Mr. Cranleigh has enriched biological science by his discovery upon an outlying island of the horned creature with digitated feet and a prehensile tail which may perhaps occupy the startling gap hitherto existing between the ox, the bear, and the anthropoid ape, and will, as we are to-day informed, carry Mr. Cranleigh's name down with honour to remote generations. It is not only this, but by his accurate observations upon the folklore (as it has become the fashion to call it) of the islanders themselves, he has also further advanced our knowledge of the transcendent fact——'"

"Of the what?" he groaned.

"Now, please don't interrupt," she said. "Oh, here it is: 'Our knowledge of the transcendent fact that even the most primitive and ignorant of mankind are one with ourselves in origin and basic ideas, and are therefore, we may confidently trust, capable of being inoculated with the same religious beliefs and social aspirations as have raised our Western civilisation to its present pitch of moral advancement and material prosperity.'"

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"O Lord, deliver them!" he said.

"'Nor must we forget,'" she went on reading, —"'nor must we forget in our estimate of Mr. Cranleigh's services to the world of science, that sooner or later the Empire profits by every fresh contact between uncivilised man and the pioneers of our dominant race, and that in the struggle for markets which has now become the leading *motif*, so to speak, in the world's great symphony, every achievement such as his is a starting-point from which infinite advantage may accrue to our world-wide trade, to our merchant-princes and the incalculable commercial destinies which they control, and so, by a process of permeation, to our poorer brethren among the working classes and to all other members and associates in the body politic.'"

"Corrugated iron, barbed wire, second-hand clothes, gin, unspeakable diseases, indistinguishable ruin, and a missionary to slime over our consciences!" said Cranleigh, wiping his razor.

"Never mind," she answered. "There's lots more of it, and it's fame. Oh, I'm so glad! Everybody in England will be talking about you to-day. They'll almost think as much of you as I do!"

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"One or two old buffers at the Athenæum will be wagging their bald heads and asking each other what I've done to make such a fuss about," he said. "But now I must have my bath, darling. I shall be down in a minute."

"Don't be long," she said, kissing him again. "There's such a funny-looking little letter for you! It's a woman's hand, and it has got a crest on it. Think of having a crest in these days!"

"Merely a survival of the totem, or perhaps of the worship of transmigrating ancestors," he answered and disappeared with his towel.

When he came down into the sunshiny little room looking over Battersea Park, he took up the paper again, to see what the reporter had made of his lecture, and found that all the important points had been cut out, and what remained read like a panegyric on British progress.

"Oh, confound these newspapers!" he cried. "They garble every single thing. I wonder what a Jerusalem editor would have left of Isaiah! 'Who hath believed our report?'—I suppose that might have stood."

"Now, don't be nasty, please," she said. "The test of a really nice husband is to be

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amiable at breakfast. Here's your funny little letter."

"Bovine and herbivorous creature carrying a banner with a strange device," he said, looking at the crest on the back of the envelope. "Now, if that's a real totem, the whole family is excluded for ever from the joys of horse-radish sauce."

"Forwarded from the publishers, you see," she said.

"Yes, didn't know our address," he answered, glancing through the letter. "Now listen: this is really rather magnificent. It is almost as good as your leader:—

"'Dear Mr. Cranleigh,

"'I must ask you to believe that I am not one of those who are always writing to authors about their books. Indeed, I have never done so before. But your book is so different from the others, and I have taken such delight in it! Ever since I was a girl I have dreamed of a book by a man who was poet and hero combined, and now I feel that I am almost intimate with you already. May I not be allowed a more personal knowledge of one whose work I admire so much? Will you not come to see me here? Any day—or why not to-morrow, about four? I shall be alone and we can have a delightful talk about all your wanderings. My husband is much engaged upon what

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people call pleasure; else I think he would join in my invitation. Though, of course, our tastes are not necessarily similar. Why should they be?

"'Yours most sincerely,

"'AMY L. MOBERLY CORSER.'"

"That's very nice of her, isn't it?" said Cranleigh with a little laugh.

"Let me look," Christabel answered, and holding the paper ever so little nearer her nose than was necessary for sight, she drew in her breath. But she was wrong.

"Brook Street," she said. "That's rather fashionable, isn't it?"

"Richish, but rather decent sort of people," he answered.

"Gilded mediocrity?" she suggested.

"Better than that," he said; "professional sort of people—good barristers and doctors, well-paid officials, and an occasional lord."

"Not quite the sort of people you would most detest," she answered.

"Oh, no—not the very worst at all. Not the kind, though, to supply the portentous millionaire who is to fit out my next expedition."

"We were married twenty-three and a half days before you went out last time. You were

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gone eighteen months. You have been back eight weeks, and now you want to leave me again!"

The words were protesting, but the smile endearingly happy.

"I don't want to leave you," he said, putting his hand up her thin sleeve to touch the soft inward of her arm. "I don't want to leave you, I only want to go."

"But I can't go with you—I can't now," she said, looking away; "any more than I can go to your delightful talk with Mrs. Amy What's-her-name."

"Well, why shouldn't you come to her?"

"Her face would be worth seeing when I walked in before you," she answered.

"Then why not see it?" he asked.

"What is it she says about her husband?" she went on. "'Our tastes are not necessarily similar. Why should they be?' Why, indeed?"

"Well, that's very sensible."

"Am I very sensible?" she asked, and she held his hand against her heart.

"I only meant," he said soothingly, "it's so dreary to assume husband and wife think exactly the same about everything."

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"I don't want to be husband and wife," she said.

"But we can hardly help it now, dearest. You once thought you would like it. What is it you want to be now?"

"Oh, never mind," she said. "When will you go? This afternoon?"

"I hadn't even thought of going. But still there is nothing much to do to-day now that the lecture's over."

"And she so longs for a more personal knowledge, though she feels almost intimate with you already. I suppose that's how she knew you were a poet and hero combined. I didn't know it. I'm afraid we two have never been quite intimate, have we? 'Strangers yet,' as my old aunt used to sing!"

"Now if you talk like that," he said, kneeling at her side and taking her tenderly in his arms while she laughed with mocking affection—"if you talk like that, I shan't go at all!"

"I wasn't exactly urging you to go," she said; "but it would be a pity to give up what people call pleasure, as she says of her husband. I wonder what he does call pleasure?"

"Oh, I don't know—shooting, riding, races, cricket—one can't tell."

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"No," she said, "he's not that sort of man. She wouldn't have talked about a hero then. He plays bridge all day, or he loafs, or haunts the stage-doors. Perhaps he drinks. No wonder!"

"Don't be spiteful, dearest. Poor woman! Very likely she has a pretty bad time; many women do, you know."

"Solemn thought!" she sighed.

"Yes," he went on, deliberating, "it's rather a nuisance, but I think perhaps I ought to go. I don't see much of the outside world. I wish I did, but it is the same with us all: science is certainly narrowing."

"Am I narrowing?" she asked. "Or are you referring to the Pacific Ocean?"

"Well, seriously now," he said, taking her left hand and twisting the delicate little fingers in and out of his, as a New Guinea native plays cat's cradle—"seriously, I suppose I may as well go. It doesn't much matter one way or other."

"Seriously, it is one of the penalties of fame," she exclaimed in a voice of mock tragedy.

"Besides, it would evidently give the woman a certain amount of pleasure, and it isn't often one can give pleasure so easily."

"Thank heaven, you cannot say that I am

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easily pleased," she answered. "And to think she has never done such a thing before as write to an author about his book! Just imagine what it must have cost her! Oh, she will be overjoyed, poor retiring thing!"

"Well, you needn't mock," he said. "I've known other women glad to see me, and one of them was infinitely sweeter than she is likely to be."

"Dearest," she said, stroking his hair, "that horrid sun has bleached you terribly. You are quite respectably grizzled. I'm so glad I got the publishers to put that old picture of you in the book. Your hair was all black then—beautifully black and fluffy. You remember that summer time when first—you remember?"

"Oh, a man really can't bother about his looks," he said. "That can't be helped. If he does anything, he's sure to show it."

"If he does nothing, he shows it worse," she said. "I love your brinded hair."

"Then why do you call it respectable?"

"Oh, I don't know. I was only thinking about that picture. I like everyone who reads the book to see you just as I saw you first. What clothes will you go in?"

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"Oh, that doesn't matter. Nobody notices a man's clothes."

"Of course not; but I expect you ought to go in a frock coat and tall hat by rights."

"Haven't got either," he said, looking at the newspaper.

"No," she answered, "but I tell you what—you must go as a poet and hero combined—the broad-brimmed hat and the angular suit you had made at Singapore! That will be characteristic, at all events."

"Why not?" he asked. "It's quite decent and comfortable. For a native tailor it's not half bad."

"I tell you, it's just the thing for a hero and poet combined, especially the hero. And I like you in those bluey greys; they match your dear hair."

"Besides," he said conclusively, "they're the only things I've got."

"To be sure," she answered, "and the *Times* leader will cover all deficiencies, just as well as a neatly made patch."

"She will have been interested to see that—the very same day too, as it happens. I suppose she's a pretty keen student of science. I hope she

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won't want to hear the whole lecture through, though it's the best thing I've ever done."

"Have *I* ever wanted to hear the whole lecture through?" she asked innocently.

"Well, no, but you're not exactly scientific. Besides, we've got other things to talk about, haven't we?" and he caressed her again.

"There, dearest—there——" she said. "Of course she's scientific, and scientific women never have other things to talk about, have they? I wonder what time you'll get back."

"Well, if I once begin talking about the islanders, I go on, as you know. It depends how long she lets me rip."

"Ah, yes! I had forgotten about the islanders," she said with a little sigh. "I'll say dinner at half-past seven. There'll still be time to take me a little way along the Embankment in the evening, won't there? even though you have had an admiring leader all to yourself in the morning and an admiring lady all to yourself in the afternoon."

"Dear heart," he said, "I won't go at all if you don't want me to. I'm sure I don't care one way or the other."

"I long for you to go," she answered.

As he crossed Battersea Bridge that afternoon,

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and made his way by 'bus to Hyde Park Corner, London was as gay as can be under her white sunshine, untouched with gold. He was securely happy and at ease. Walking slowly along the Park, he looked at the people and the carriages with that kindly and good-tempered sympathy which only success can give. All the world seemed remarkably contented and satisfied with itself. Horses glittered, men imparted information, women assumed virtue or vice according as they had it not, nursemaids fluttered, loungers stared, footmen maintained an air of passive resignation. To all of them the summer sun had brought their best opportunity, and all were playing their special parts to the very height of their power. In no other city of the world, thought Cranleigh, could the thing have been done with such seriousness and to such perfection. After all, there was something pleasing and piquant in the change from the Solomon Islands.

"'Breathes there a man with soul so dead?'" he quoted to himself as a middle-aged woman, glancing down her long nose at the pug-dog in her lap, was dragged past him by two sparkling horses under the charge of two powerfully built men.

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Every now and then, in the midst of his pleasurable interest, came the secret little joy of triumph. After the long years of obscurity, it certainly was very pleasant to emerge ever so little. At last he counted for something. He laughed at the praise of the *Times*, but still it was praise. Probably half the men there had seen his name that morning in one paper or another, and remembered him vaguely as someone to be envied. They did not know that the man who had suddenly risen to fame was quietly watching them from inside the railings.

"And it isn't only the men," he reflected with another little ripple of pleasure. "On my word, I have almost raised myself to the position of a pug-dog. I must hurry up or I shall be late after all."

It struck four as he rang the bell, and the door was opened by an immortal soul in uniform, who received Cranleigh's cheerful greeting of "Good afternoon" with eyes fixed vacantly upon the purple of eternity at an infinite distance in space. Mrs. Moberly Corser was at home.

He was shown into a small room curtained off from one much larger, through which he passed first, successfully avoiding all the little tables,

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Turkish stools, and fur rugs, over which it would have been so easy to stumble. "It is like navigating an archipelago," he thought to himself.

It was a relief to find that the inner room was comparatively empty, though the light was much subdued by curtains and embroidered blinds that almost covered the windows. In front of the fireplace three white lilies stood, filling the air with their heavy sweetness, and above the mantelpiece hung a dimly visible painting of the "Rape of Proserpine," which had been conspicuous in the New Gallery a few years before.

He had hardly become accustomed to the cool obscurity when the folding curtains parted and a woman stood for a moment between them with her figure in strong relief against the brightness of the outer room. As she just turned sideways to draw the curtains together again, Cranleigh saw that her golden and delicately fitting dress was modelled on the Proserpine, with only such additions as are required by the difference between Hyde Park and Eleusis.

"Oh, how good of you to come at once!" she cried as she advanced. "It is so depressing to wait for pleasures. If you wait, they are quite different before they come. But in fact your

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book has made me feel that we have met already, as I told you."

She gave him a soft little hand, which his seemed to engulf.

"It is very nice of you to say so," Cranleigh answered. "Of course I saw from your letter that we were both deeply interested in the same branch of science."

"Yes," she replied. "And yet the interest of your book is not its science, but its life. At least, to me that is its interest. It takes one into a new and glorious world, free from the common round, the trivial task, that people dull their souls with pretending to like."

"Certainly," he said, "there is always something very attractive among primitive peoples, and it is only by living with them that we can properly study what we call origins. They take us back at a stride into other periods of mankind."

"It must be so splendid," she said, "to pass from the steamer into the Stone Age, and by a step to cast off all the trammels of conventional existence. That is what I should love."

"Of course you would," said Cranleigh. "That is what I like too. It is always interesting to watch the growth or the decay of conven-

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tions. Up to a certain point they certainly do grow with increasing civilisation, and some of them continue to develop indefinitely. A decorated room like this is a convention that it has taken immense ages to develop from nests like the bower bird's. But as a rule conventions seem to rise to a climax and to become less strict after a certain stage."

"A stage we are far enough from having reached in London," she said with a sigh.

"Oh, we have passed it long ago," said Cranleigh gaily. "Why, there have been ages, and there are plenty of races still, in which convention in the shape of a husband would cut off a woman's hand if she were found conversing on anthropology as we are conversing now!"

"Even with us convention sometimes takes the shape of a husband," she said, laughing. "But no one would object to such conventions as you describe. They would make life splendid —like a succession of Arabian Nights! One would risk a hand or two for that!"

She laughed softly again, and leaning far back in her deep, low chair she held up a hand in a thin shaft of sunshine that came in through the blinds, so that the divisions between her fingers

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shone red. The light was caught and reflected in the brilliant dark eyes and along the soft lines of the figure, visible under the folds of daffodil silk.

Cranleigh looked at her for a moment in silence, and as he looked a flash of fire passed through him unawares, like the magic sword that cleaves men in half without their knowing it till they shake themselves and fall asunder.

"As I was saying," he exclaimed suddenly, "there is no subject quite so interesting as the study of origins. I'm sure you think so too!"

"Indeed I do," she answered, gently fondling one hand with the other. "This commonplace and bloodless world of ours! Oh, how different life would be in a country such as that! It would be a shame to cut it off, of course, and yet what woman would not lose a hand for the man she really loved?"

"Well, you know," he said, laughing and moving in his chair, "even out there most women keep both their hands on all right. I have a pamphlet upon the custom which I can send you, if you care to look at it."

"Oh, thank you so much! Of course I should.

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I love strange things like that. Are they very beautiful?"

"The women on the islands, you mean? Oh, yes; beautifully tattooed sometimes. Though a dress is quite as beautiful really, I think. It is difficult to get to know much about the women out there, but it seemed to me that a man had to dance extraordinarily well or else to possess a very fine series of his enemies' skulls before a nicely tattooed girl would propose to him! You remember, of course, the women propose. It is probably a relic of matriarchy."

"How exquisitely right!" she said. "The woman ought always to be the chooser. There would be far fewer mistakes. But what if the man refuses?"

"That must be where the difficulty comes in," Cranleigh admitted. "It is impossible for any man to refuse with grace, when a woman proposes."

"Yet he might love someone better?" she suggested.

"I cannot imagine what happens in a case like that," he answered, shaking his head, with a smile. "It must be terrible, but I have never had an opportunity of discovering."

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"Legally, of course," she said, laughing too, "the rejected woman ought to have the right to kill him. There is no other endurable solution, is there? At least not for people like ourselves. But very likely we are over-civilised and too fastidious about such things. I suppose those beautiful island women are far less complex, less sensitive and highly strung."

"Oh, not at all," said Cranleigh. "You remember, we tested them."

"Tested them?" she asked.

"Yes, with a pair of compasses," he said, clasping his hands round one knee and speaking in his most matter-of-fact manner. "A simple method, but the best we could manage. You try how soon the points are felt, and how soon they are recognised as two. You remember we found the islanders every bit as sensitive as European women."

"Do you call that a test of sensitiveness?" she asked.

"Well, it was the best we had," he said cheerfully.

"And do you herd all European women together?"

"Science cares only for averages," he answered.

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"I know women who would shake your averages," she cried, standing up and moving quietly past him.

"By an infinitesimal point of decimals," he answered, standing up too, but planting his heels firmly together. As she crossed the shaft of light and sent a flash of gold through the obscurity, he felt the air from her dress undulate against him like invisible water.

"Is it not horrible," she said, "that one should count for no more than a speck of dust? What is a decimal point to me—to me who could sweep round the earth with moon and stars and think them small?"

"The wonder is," he answered, "that any speck of dust should have a thought so vast."

"Look," she cried, "this is our only life. Day will follow day till we die, and then what shall we have been? How much of us that we can call ourselves will have existed at all? It all lies here, hidden and unknown. Day will follow day till we die, and it will never be known and never used. Speck of dust as I am, nearly the whole of me might just as well never have existed. What has been the good of an infinite soul and all the rest of it to me? I shall die wasted."

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"I am very sorry," said Cranleigh with determined calmness. "Many women would envy your life in a home like this. I am very sorry you don't like it."

"Oh, please, don't talk like that," she answered. "Don't talk about likes and dislikes. It is so much more than that. Or come now," she added, standing opposite him, "to use your own word, how would you like it yourself?"

"Well," he said, laughing and looking away as though to consider the point more dispassionately, "I don't suppose I should care for it very much. But then so many people wouldn't care about things that suit me well enough."

"What sort of things?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing particularly glorious," he said. "But I like working at the little patch of science, which is interesting even to you. And then I am perfectly happy living with savages, and navigating a boat, or standing all day on a platform above the sea, ready to plunge the harpoon into a dugong as it passes."

"Certainly you don't ask much," she said with a little sigh. "But most people don't get even that. If you hadn't got it, what would you have done?"

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"Oh well," he said, looking at her again and laughing, "I suppose I should have worked in a bank and caught moths in Battersea Park."

"Oh no, no!" she cried, beginning to move softly up and down the room again. "You are only laughing. Is there nothing more than that in life? Do you grant nothing for splendid fame, nothing for the desire of perfection, or even for such things as ordinary love and hatred?"

"Certainly," he said in the same deliberately quiet voice. "I allow for all that sort of thing too. Like Darwin, I include the domestic affections. 'Work and the domestic affections,' you remember he said, were all that is needed. What more can one want?"

"What more?" she cried scornfully, quickening her pace a very little. "What more can one want? I want a whole bodily and spiritual universe besides! and so do you, and so does everybody! I want to float down black rivers under the stars, with my beloved in my arms. I want to gallop far over the desert, my crimson cloak streaming on the wind—gallop so fast that he should never catch me, though I longed for him. I want to stand with him in the front of war, and cherish him in caves where the heroes of freedom hide.

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I want to sit under a glittering dome and rule an empire with him beside me. I want to dwell alone in a forest at the edge of an undiscovered lake and listen day and night to the water and the sound of the trees, till suddenly I hear a far-off horn. I want to be worshipped by a city because I stood all night naked in prayer before the market cross that the pestilence might be stayed. I want to strangle the tyrant as he lies asleep at my side. I want to watch the woman I hate writhing in the embrace of a man she despises. I want to drink pearls. I want to sweep the garret of genius. I want to say of kings they are my slaves. I want the moon for my boat, and the purple skies for my curtains. I want to contemplate the symbols of eternity till my soul sees only immortal things. I want to lie upon the blue breasts of the infinite mother, and smile at the stars for shining and at eternity for making haste. Those are a few of the things I want, and what is the good of talking to me about work and the domestic affections?"

The rich voice with its many varied tones was still, leaving a silence audible in the room. She stood close before him, looking at him fiercely for a moment, and as she turned her face half aside

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he saw the quick movement of her breast. Again the lightning sword slid through him, and he moved one hand till almost imperceptibly it touched her dress. For what seemed a long time neither spoke, but he knew the silence was full of a tremulous intimacy.

"These things," he said at last, "must not be thought after these ways; so, it will make us mad. Lady Macbeth said so after a mere murder."

"Does madness matter?" she said.

"I don't know," he answered; "but on the whole, I think sanity gets more things done."

"Does that matter?" she said again.

"Very likely not," he answered, "except for the happiness of the man who does them."

"I have a good mind to ask if that matters either," she said, laughing, "but I can't be so ungracious. You have done all manner of wonderful things."

"Oh dear no!" he said, with a sense of relief, as when a struggling swimmer feels the ground again under his feet. "I have neither done nor seen anything at all remarkable. It has all been on quite a commonplace and paltry level. In two minutes you have called up more splendid visions of life than I have seen in forty years."

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"What is the good of visions?" she said. "Was there not a lady who said, 'I am half sick of shadows?' What you have done has been solid and real."

"That doesn't make much difference," he answered. "The very strangest situations always seem to me quite matter-of-course when I am in them."

"I believe you think me quite a matter-of-course," she said swiftly.

His hand that had touched her dress just touched her wrist, and his spirit swayed as though he had been walking on an earthquake. Slowly, hair's-breadth by hair's-breadth, the fingers stole down into her palm till hers just bent round and touched them.

"Don't say that," he said at last in a voice that sounded strange to him. "Don't say that, because it is not true."

She turned towards him without raising her head, and he felt the light folds of her dress.

The thin ray of light, which gleamed with prismatic dust in the obscurity, now fell upon him, and by one of those tricks with which the humorous spirit delights to mock itself when emotion is running high, he suddenly became

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conscious of all the errors and deficiencies in his appearance, which had never given him a moment's trouble before. He was conscious that the light was shining on his silvered hair, and as though he were looking at some caricature, he felt the bulging trousers, the short waistcoat, the skimpiness of the jacket across the chest, and the troublesome way it had of folding backwards in deep wrinkles instead of hanging straight. He remembered the immense efforts of the Singapore tailor and his childlike joy over so conspicuous a triumph in European ways.

"You see," he said, with much apparent inconsequence—"you see, I am in love with my wife."

In the silence he heard a clock slowly ticking somewhere in the outer room.

"That must be very pleasant," she said at last, when the clock had already ticked through some bars of "Home, Sweet Home," that was running in his head. "One sometimes forgets that it is possible."

"Oh yes," he answered, "it is possible."

"And you have your patch of science as well," she went on, gently separating her hand from his, "and your savages and dugongs, and fame besides!"

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"Why should you turn and rend me?" he said.

"Well," she answered, "you said the other things were what you liked, and you have love and fame to crown them all. I suppose they count for something. Work and the domestic affections—as you say, what more do you want?"

"Nothing more," he said resolutely—"nothing more, except a whole bodily and spiritual universe!"

She raised her eyes slowly to his and smiled.

"Then we can almost cry quits after all," she said. "Almost!" she repeated with a long-drawn breath.

"My dear! my dear!" called an impatient voice at the further end of the long room, whilst a door was heard to open suddenly. "Where are you, my dear? Are you there?"

"That is my convention," she said, giving Cranleigh both her hands for a moment, and then moving back towards the sofa. "Yes, James, we are here," she went on, raising her voice a little. "Mr. Cranleigh has come to see us, and your arrival is what people call providential, for he was just going away. Let me introduce—Mr. Corser—Mr. Cranleigh."

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"Delighted, my dear, delighted, I'm sure," said a portly person, who threw open the curtains and came forward in the dim light. "But I do wish, my love, you would not insist on living in a dark room like a photographer. It is quite embarrassing."

"Oh no," she answered. "It is the light that is sometimes embarrassing. But you may draw up the blind and put the curtains back if you like. I think the sun must have gone off the windows. The air seems to have turned positively chilly. You know the feeling, Mr. Cranleigh, when they turn up the lights in a theatre at the end of a play?"

"Yes," he said, "or when one comes out into the daylight from a midsummer matinée."

"After all," she said, "it is only a return to sanity—to that sanity you are so fond of." She sank back on the low sofa, and after one glance at Cranleigh, who was now standing in the full light, she silently closed her eyes.

"Well, Mr. Cranleigh," said her husband in a hearty and comfortable tone as he came back from the window, "I am very glad to meet you. I heard someone or other mention your name at the club only just now, and I saw there was

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something about you in the *Times* this morning too."

"Yes," said Cranleigh. "I always read the *Times* myself; it seems to give a solidity to one's day."

"I quite agree," said the other. "The day is incomplete without the *Times*. But this morning, just as I was looking at the leading articles, my eldest little girl came in with a bad headache. How does Elsie seem this evening, my dear?"

"You didn't tell me there was anything in the paper about Mr. Cranleigh," she said.

"Oh well," he answered, "you don't take much interest in scientific things as a rule. You would hardly believe it, Mr. Cranleigh, but I really think you are the first man of science my wife has taken a fancy to since we married. It was all that book of yours! I brought it back from Mudie's because I am a scientific man myself. I don't say she read very much of it. It was the portrait captivated her. I assure you, it made me quite jealous, didn't it, my love?"

"Mr. Cranleigh has been telling me some horrible stories of how savages treat their women," she said, turning one cheek against the cushion. "He has seen such unusual things!"

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"I envy you," said her husband to Cranleigh. "I wish I had the time to go gadding about the world. It must be very pleasant if you have the means. I should do just like you if only I could afford it."

"You see, the Society and the University clubbed together to fit out the expedition," said Cranleigh.

"That makes a difference, of course," said the other, standing in front of the lilies in the fireplace, and putting his hands behind his back by inherited instinct. "But if they had offered me such a post, I should have had to refuse it, as being a family man. Shouldn't I, my love?"

"Mr. Cranleigh didn't refuse it," she said, "and he is married too."

"I'm afraid I'm not a good family man at all," said Cranleigh, laughing.

"Of course everyone must judge of his own duty," said Mr. Corser, "but I am always on the side of self-sacrifice. Any woman worthy of the name will sacrifice herself for her children, and in my opinion the same ought to be true of a man. Within limits—I mean—within reasonable limits, of course. I have already asked you how Elsie is this afternoon, my love. Her head

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was very hot when I went to the club before lunch, and I didn't quite like the look of Basil, or of baby either, for that matter. Before I went out, I told the nurse exactly what to do, but I see from the *Times* there is quite an epidemic of measles raging in the slums of Notting Hill—rather dangerously close.

"Forgive these domestic details, Mr. Cranleigh," he went on after a contemplative pause. "As an anthropologist, you must recognise the all-importance of race. I consider it a citizen's duty to be extremely careful about his children, and above all to select his wife entirely with a view to heredity. It is on that account, I am proud to say, that my own marriage has been so extraordinarily successful. Hasn't it, my love?"

He sat down close by her side upon the sofa, and, laying one hand upon her lap, tried playfully with the other to turn her averted face towards his. Quietly rising, she came into the middle of the room.

"I am sorry you have to go, Mr. Cranleigh," she said. "It was so very kind of you to come, and I have so much enjoyed all you told me about your travels. Please give my kind regards to Mrs. Cranleigh. Of course you will be going

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away again soon. I wonder if we shall meet again."

"I wonder," said Cranleigh, taking the soft little hand again, and looking again at the eyes that now seemed to have a dark shutter drawn down over them. Only by her quickened breathing could he have guessed her passionate shame.

"So glad I happened to come in," said her husband, as they went down the long room together. "I quite envy you your fame. I'd write a book myself if only I had the opportunity. My wife thinks it would be good for me to do something of that sort. She's a clever woman—a little impulsive, no doubt, but I believe in woman's rights. And we all like a woman with a bit of mettle in her, don't we?"

"Certainly we do," said Cranleigh, and the monumental footman let him out.

The last carriages were leaving the park, the crowd was languidly trailing home, the air was full of dust, and a motor-car clattered past, leaving cubic acres of smell in its wake.

"I was despicably happy as I came," he thought to himself. "I wonder why. There was not the least reason; but how glorious it was!"

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At home he found Christabel standing quietly at one end of the room, dressed in pale greens and blue that reflected the sunset light on the greens and blue of the outside grass and sky. Her back was towards him, and she was fixing a dark rose at her neck, but hearing his step she held out one hand without turning round. He hesitated a moment, touching it timidly, as though it were a stranger's. Then he embraced her with a passionate tenderness, an almost tearful delight, such as he had not known before.

"You must not, you really must not!" she cried, laughing. "The one thing I cannot endure is being dishevelled. And remember, we're quite respectably married, as you told me this morning."

"Never say that!" he answered fiercely.

"Well then, disreputably married," she laughed. "And if you don't take care, I shall have to do my hair again, and as to dinner—of course you don't mind how long it waits or how long you wait for it, but I do. I belong to the regular, prosaic, and greedy sex."

"There, dear one, don't mock at me," he said rather sadly. "I know I must seem very unromantic and unimaginative and all that. I think

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our minds are built in water-tight compartments, and there are some we dare not open for fear of sinking the ship. But we pay for safety by the commonplace, and then people think us dull as lead. It's a great pity."

"Not at all a pity," she said, as they went into the next room. "Somebody has to be punctual as a star and constant — no, I don't mean constant — I mean practical, as a lighthouse. I love you for being like that, just as you must love me for being unpunctual as the wind and unpractical as a rainbow; and those are both very beautiful things too. Besides, who has been thinking you as dull as lead? That's hardly the right word for your first great day of glory!"

"My first day of glory?" he repeated absently.

"Yes—'The Leader and the Lady, or How I found Fame,' as the title of a novel would say! Which was the sweetest? Of course you must say the leader. Was it the lady who thought you as dull as lead?"

"Oh, I don't know," he answered. "I thought so myself, and that is the thing that matters most. Very likely she thought so too. She was not, strictly speaking, very much interested in comparative anthropology, after all."

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"Strictly speaking, she wasn't very much interested in comparisons between one man and another, after all? That was disappointing. What did she think of your hair?"

"My hair? She never noticed my hair. Why should she?"

"Why should she?" Christabel echoed. "And what did she think of the heroic coat? Did she compare it to the flag that braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze?"

"Don't be ridiculous, dear one," he said. "Sensible people never think about such things, one way or other."

"Oh, she was a sensible person, was she? Did you tell her so?"

"You can be positively exasperating when you choose," he laughed.

"What did you tell her then?"

"Oh, well," he said, "I told her all she wanted to know about the native customs."

"Thrilling!" she answered.

"I know," he admitted humbly. "She certainly didn't seem much interested in that kind of stuff, in spite of her letter. She was a good deal preoccupied with other things."

"Sad things, of course," she said. "No

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ordinary woman ever confides her happiness to a man. I hope you were properly sympathetic?"

"I didn't say she was an ordinary woman," he answered. "But, seriously, the poor thing seemed to be very unhappy."

"If you ever call me a poor thing," she said, "I'll tear your heart out and slam the door! What was the matter with the poor thing?"

"I was wrong," he answered. "She was very far indeed from being a poor thing."

"I meant, who was the matter?" she went on. "That is always the question with women."

"Oh, no one in particular, I think," he said. "Her husband came in."

"That was very inconsiderate of him," she said. "But there's always the husband. Who else was the matter?"

"No one was the matter, as far as I know," he answered. "But couldn't we leave her alone?"

"Are you going to shut her up in a water-tight compartment?" she asked, laughing.

"I think I am," he answered.

"Lest she should sink the ship?" she asked.

"Many things are sad," he said.

"Why sad?" she asked. "How was she dressed?"

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"Something yellow — I mean golden — I believe," he answered.

"Thin silk—very soft—Empress style?" she said.

"I don't know about Empress style," he replied, getting up to cut some bread.

She followed his movements with an amused but searching look, and at last she laughed outright.

"I sometimes half think I love you," she said, "and I know you love me, but when I write my immortal work, called 'The Adult's Guide to Knowledge,' the first question in the book will be, 'What woman does a man love best?' Answer: 'The nearest.'"

"And if the catechist answered, 'The furthest off'?" he said dreamily.

"That would be rude," she replied. "Has she any children?" she added in a softer voice.

"Knee-deep in them already, I think," he answered.

"Already?" she sighed. "Then she's quite young?"

She drew in her breath suddenly as though at a spasm of pain, and passed the back of her hand over her cheek.

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"Was he quite unendurable?" she asked.

"Oh, no," he said. "A bulgy, jabbery, fatherly sort of a man, that's all."

"Loathsome!" she whispered, and hid her face in her hands.

"Yes," he answered, "and yet he would take the prize for duty anywhere."

"I hate duty," she said, "it is a stuffy old female!"

"Well," he went on, "the man certainly reminded me of one stuffy old custom you find in many parts of the world—the woman, you know, gets up and goes out into the fields, and the man goes to bed with the baby."

"I shall not ask you to do that," she said shyly. "But you will come out with me a little while into the fields now, won't you, dearest? I believe it is good for—well—good for the totem."

"Totem?" he asked.

"Oh," she said, going to the window, "I call him the totem at present. I suppose he's as good as a crest."

"Crests and totems?" he said. "Whose totem?"

"Why, darling," she said, coming quickly towards him, "don't you remember what the lead-

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ing article said about a creature with digitated feet that is to hand down Mr. Cranleigh's name with honour to remote generations? It isn't often that a journalist is so prophetic, or a man of science so insufferably stupid, is it?

"So ends our first day of fame," she said after a while. "I do hope he'll be famous, splendidly famous."

"Oh, don't talk about fame," he answered. "I hope he'll do everything I might have done, and much more besides."

"Now, don't be melancholy," she said. "Melancholy people are always such humbugs. I'm never serious till I laugh, and besides, your best life is only just beginning."

"Well then," he said, laughing, "I hope he will live among what someone has called the glimpses of eternal things."

"Anybody can do that," she said.

"That is the beauty of it," he answered.

"Yes, that is the beauty of it," she said with a little sigh of happiness, looking up at him and smiling with joy.

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THE BONE CAVE

So bright the sea-worn boulder throws
  Up from the beach the summer's glare,
That all the cavern ruddier glows
  Than a black heart transfixed and bare.

The cavern's mouth is tufted o'er
  With ancient ivy and with fern,
And far along the murmuring shore
  Is heard the ancient tide's return.

The punctual tide returns, as when,
  In hot creation's teeming prime,
Vast, dreamy monsters of the fen
  Crawled here to sun their coated slime,

Or sprawl within the dark recess,
  From lightning hid and fiery wind,
Rending with cruel wantonness
  The coiled embraces of their kind.

And murmuring thus returned the tide,
  When here a joyous creature ran,
Haling along a shaggy bride
  To nurse the whining brood of man.

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The cavern's floor is deep with bones,
  There lie the lizards, layer on layer,
As innocent as shapeless stones,
  And man is couching with the bear;

And all is silent save the sea,
  Still as a heart with memories piled
Of dreamy things that used to be,
  And love that wept, and grief that smiled.

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PLYMOUTH
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON
PRINTERS

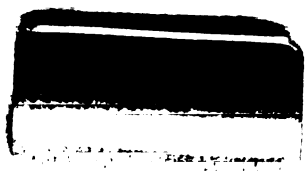
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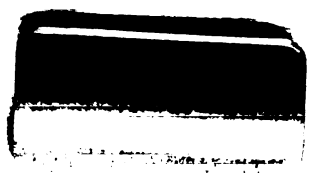


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